

MEXICAN IMMIGRATION POLICY: INFORMING CHANGE ON BOTH
SIDES OF THE BORDER THROUGH UNDERSTANDING, COOPERATION
AND POVERTY REDUCTION

by
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Abstract

Immigration has re-emerged in the United States mind frame within the last few years making it an issue of importance in any policy discussion. The unique history that the United States and Mexico have contributes to the complex and interdependent relationship that has emerged over time. That relationship creates a framework of importance within any policy discussion and brings immigration to the forefront as an issue of importance that uniquely interconnects both countries politically, socially and economically as the effects on one side always reverberate on the other. Policy reform is crucial to maintaining a concrete relationship.

Any future debate or policy reform should take into consideration the findings within this thesis for lasting successful policy reform to succeed. The often complicated relationship between the United States and Mexico make creating a clear and successful immigration policy important not only for current policy reform, but for future cooperation. A clear understanding of immigration, bilateral cooperation between both countries, and poverty reduction within Mexico are at the forefront of the key findings within this thesis that should be considered within the framework of any future policy reform. Each is of the utmost importance for successful policy reform and for overall change in immigration on both sides of the border.

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Introduction

A successful relationship between Mexico and the United States economically, politically and socially relies on an understanding between both countries that their history is both vast and complicated. Embedded within that history is the issue of immigration, both legal and illegal, that has created tension on both sides of the border. Migrating Mexicans have a long history of crossing the border into the United States of which illegal immigration has created the biggest trans border tension. Immigration policy reform on both sides of the border is a crucial step in addressing that tension and important in continuing the long standing economic, political and social ties that consistently bring the two countries together. As two countries that share close to a two thousand mile border of consistently flowing goods and people, and a closely tied economy, creating a successful immigration policy reform is crucial to maintaining a stable relationship between and within both countries.

This thesis will delve into the issue of Mexican immigration in three chapters that explore immigration from varying perspectives in an attempt at creating an understanding of the issue as a whole via future U.S. immigration reform, the need for bilateral immigration reform and an understanding that successful change within Mexico itself will help stem the flow by tackling poverty. The key findings within this thesis show that a successful immigration policy reform between both countries stems from an

understanding of the complexity of their history, understanding the history of immigration itself which reveals a migratory circuit fueled by more than the desire for work, the need for a bilateral foreign policy approach and the continued success of addressing poverty by Mexico in order to stem migration. Mexico and the U.S. have consistently missed opportunities to create a lasting immigration policy in recent decades by not addressing and understanding issues such as social networking and most importantly the push of poverty.

Immigration is a topic of both interest and contention within the United States. Recent political interest on the topic has put it at the forefront of the debate within the United States once again and made it a topic of which further interest and proper discussion and understanding is warranted if the debate is to yield any future changes within the U.S. or between the two countries. The topic of immigration reform within the United States has come up often within the last three administrations without a successful resolution and or policy reform. Each administration has missed crucial opportunities for bringing about change on either side of the border.

Several reasons have lead to the failure of the U.S. in implementing a successful immigration policy in recent decades, but any attempt at understanding why must come first from understanding the history of immigration itself and that in turn is why this thesis is of importance in today's political and policy landscape. Mexico and the United States have

been uniquely interconnected since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 when a vast portion of Mexico became part of the United States, as did a large number of Mexican citizens. This connection has created a uniquely unusual political, economic and social connection that has created an interconnection between both countries with reverberating effects that are often felt on both sides. This connection is so strong that what happens on one side almost always affects the other. With this in mind any possible current or future immigration policy reform must take into consideration not only the history of immigration, but must also comprehend the root causes learned from that history for there to be sustainable policy implementation in the future.

Chapter one of this thesis discusses the importance of understanding not only the history of immigration from Mexico to the U.S., but “why” immigration occurs and how understanding those underlying factors is crucial for any successful future U.S. immigration policy reform. This chapter discusses the importance of the long, often neglected, history of Mexican immigration to the United States stemming from the forceful inclusion of Mexicans into the U.S. framework as far back as the 1848 treaty that created the beginning of a social network for immigration. Mexican migration to the United States prior to WWI was a free flowing system that required no documentation and was a system in which migrants came and went as they pleased. By WWII the first real need for labor in the U.S. was met by

Mexican migrants that answered the call for labor with the ultimate desire to work in the U.S. and in time return home. Permanent residency was not of utmost desire or importance for working migrants from Mexico during this time or in the near future when the Bracero Program was implemented as a temporary worker program, without caps, between the U.S. and Mexico. The program was ultimately terminated in 1964 after almost twenty years of open worker flows that allowed Mexican workers to come and go from the U.S. freely during times of labor shortages in Mexico and demand in the United States. As the border was closed and the policy channel ended for legal migration to and from the decision for many to stay in the U.S. illegally was made for fear that returning to Mexico would prevent any return to the U.S. for much needed work that many immigrants now depended on. The beginning of increased flows of illegal immigration began soon after as the number of immigrants already in the U.S. from the Bracero Program added to a social network between countries that drew family and other illegal migrants in search of better opportunities in the United States.

The implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986 was a response by the U.S. to stem the flow of illegal immigrants that flowed out of the closure of the Bracero Program from the 1960s. What the U.S. failed to see was the underlying affects such an act, that would grant amnesty to 3 million immigrants, would create as a social network between legal and illegal immigrants blossomed between the U.S.

and Mexico. That social network became a definitive and underlying “pull” factor that reinforced immigration as a whole together with other underlying determinants such as gender migration. Single women are often unwilling to migrate alone or toward the U.S. without a network of family or friends in place when they arrive therefore enhancing the need and effect of networking. The implementation of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) in the 1990s would then become the most recent economically driven attempt at effecting immigration by creating jobs within Mexico. NAFTA has been measured by its lack of success in terms of mitigating immigration as the numbers crossing into the U.S. grew from its inception into the 20th century even as Mexico benefited from the economic upswing.

Understanding the push pull factors of immigration in conjunction with the history of immigration from Mexico is of utmost importance when attempting any type of immigration reform within the United States. No successful immigration policy will succeed without understanding the importance of the intricate economic, social, and political history these two countries share and how such a history has had an effect on their immigration history. Successful future immigration policy will need to take into consideration the underlying factors that go beyond the desire for work and examine the deeply ingrained social networking aspect of immigration in order to understand why it continues outside of economic or political changes or effects within either country.

Chapter two of this thesis will discuss the foreign policy approach toward immigration by the United States and Mexico. Understanding why and how each country approaches the issue is important in understanding why bilateral immigration policy and reform has failed within the last three U.S. political administrations of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. A comprehensive approach to immigration reform that benefits both sides of the border requires active participation by both the United States and Mexico. History has dictated a U.S. stronghold in leadership and persistence in maintaining its interest not only in the region, but also within the framework of immigration reform. Valid long lasting change requires that a system of bilateral mutual cooperation exist in order for either country's foreign policy toward immigration to persist over time and to tackle the intricacies of the history and underlying push pull factories outlined in chapter one.

The United States has often taken a domestic policy approach toward immigration that has watered downed the effectiveness of policy reform or change as the issue has been intermixed with ideals and policy notions that often take away from the importance of the situation at hand. A foreign policy approach is of utmost importance within the scope of the issue in order to allow for a comprehensive framework of bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico. An understanding of the intricacies of each countries approach is discussed within this chapter as a crucial step in understanding

why policy reform has failed to materialize within the last several decades. Each country must take into consideration its unique advantages and disadvantages not only with the issue at hand, but with how their government approaches any possible solution. The U.S. and Mexico see immigration and foreign policy through different eyes that often display a relationship between the aggressor and the defendant. Long lasting policy reform will not result from this type of continued relationship.

Chapter two of this thesis also delves into the understanding of the U.S.' missed opportunities for bilateral policy reform during key foreign policy time periods within the last century. Of importance is the understanding that the only successful bilateral policy between these two countries was during the Bracero Program, which ended in the 1960s and unofficially closed the border to a free flowing system of immigration that benefited both sides. Since the 60s the U.S. has had a shift in policy reform during the last three administrations that has taken immigration off of the foreign policy debate with Mexico and instead shifted the focus toward border security, guns, violence and drug trafficking.

None of the last three United States presidential administrations, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, or Barack Obama, have created a successful bilateral immigration foreign policy with Mexico. Understanding why is an important aspect of chapter two and an important aspect of why each administration has missed an opportunity for creating a lasting immigration

policy. The history of immigration cannot be neglected when foreign policy and immigration are debated on either side or can the understanding that both sides must take equal responsibility for both prevention and creating programs for legal migration.

Chapter three of this thesis takes the approach of immigration from the Mexican side in an attempt to show the issue from both sides of the border. This chapter looks at how changes within Mexico can address one of the biggest push pull factors of immigration by discussing and tackling poverty. Mexico has one of the highest levels of inequality within Latin America and one of the highest levels of extreme poverty. A resulting side effect of such inequality and poverty has been an influx of immigration from Southern, rural, poor, Mexico to the United States. Chapter three discusses the importance of state mandated program reform in education and healthcare that addresses poverty within Mexico which in turn will address and begin to stem the flow of migration out of the country.

Mexico has taken major strides in health care reform since 2012 when it implemented its successful state run healthcare called Seguro Popular. During that year the country as a whole finished enrolling over 90 percent of the population in a state funded and run healthcare program aimed at not only addressing health care issues such as immunization and infant mortality, but most importantly addressing the need to limit poverty associated with a lack of care and expenses incurred from out of pocket cost.

Catastrophic events are fundamental precursors of not only poverty, but also often result in immigration. Mexico's stance at addressing the issue first hand was a first attempt at what might continue as a means of lowering immigration numbers in the future.

The nations *Oportunidades* program created in the late 1990s is also discussed within chapter three and is of utmost importance in understanding how a state mandated program can not only reduce poverty, but also reduce immigration. The programs main aims are at addressing health, nutrition and education. The program as a whole has been a success in improving poverty and continues to show the need for mandated change in these areas.

Poverty reduction is key to a lasting change within Mexico that in turn will have a reverberating effect on immigration. Understanding how state mandated programs and push for education and health reform will make a difference is fundamental to understanding the importance of this chapter. Addressing the effects of education and health from a young age, as Mexico has begun doing, shows a crucial change in not only improving poverty long term, but understanding the fundamental need to address the issue early enough for sustained long term change. Providing the fundamentals are now there, but how Mexico proceeds to address the needs of substantial economic stability to support change beyond that is yet to be seen.

Each chapter within this thesis discusses the issue of immigration from Mexico in its own unique way. Several themes arise throughout this

thesis that are of significance in understanding why this topic and issue is of importance in today's policy framework. The most important theme is that of social networking. This theme is seen not only within chapters one and three, but within the thesis as a whole. Social networking is fundamental in understanding why immigration continues outside of perceived notions of economic ups and downs and is a crucial push pull factor for immigration. Another theme important to this thesis is the notion of bilateral cooperation. Immigration reform on a national and foreign policy level will not succeed without cooperation on both sides of the border toward a shared responsibility approach when addressing immigration. The notion of addressing poverty as a basis for diminishing immigration numbers is a theme seen in chapter three and of crucial importance in addressing the fundamentals of immigration from the ground up. And lastly and most importantly is the understanding of the root causes of immigration as the fundamental basis for successful immigration policy reform in the future. Understanding "why" immigration occurs by understanding its history is fundamental in helping to create a sustainable immigration policy within the United States in the future.

Mexican immigration is an issue of importance in today's policy framework and should not only be studied but understood beyond the need for border security. This thesis will delve into this topic in an attempt to bring forth the need to understand the issue from both the United States and

Mexican side through varying perspectives that will allow the topic to be relevant to today's policy reform discussions. How the United States and Mexico choose to continue with the discussion remains to be seen.

Chapter 1

U.S.-Mexican Relations

Understanding the Need for a Multifaceted Approach to Immigration Policy

Immigration is a topic of continued debate in the United States that must be further discussed, debated and analyzed for future political, economic and social stability. The largest numbers currently migrating to the U.S. come from its neighbor to the south. Much of the history between the U.S. and Mexico has set the groundwork for their current immigration issues and for the recent debate and lack of immigration policy within the United States. Much of U.S. literature on Mexican migration/immigration goes as far back as the 19th century. Understanding this history is important to understanding the current debate and must be clearly understood in order to create any type of long lasting credible and sustainable immigration policy in the future that will benefit not only the U.S., but also Mexico and their bilateral relationship. With this in mind it is important to understand why immigration occurs and what cause and affects it has in order to be able to begin to undertake any concrete policies to improve it.

Immigration is a cause and effect issue that cannot be fully understood without not only understanding the immigration history between countries but also understanding the “why” that can often trigger migration that is both legal and illegal. As complex as U.S.-Mexican relations are it is easiest to breakdown the factors involved in the immigration debate by social, economic and political themes that when analyzed help portray an attempt at

understanding not only why immigration occurs, but how to successfully use that knowledge to implement a successful new immigration policy in the future. A clear understanding of the complexities of Mexican immigration requires knowledge beyond the typical areas of border enforcement and the notion of illegality and instead requires a look at a combination of key social, economic, and political areas of knowledge that when analyzed together show an area of political policy that is interdependent on it's history, is not always of an illegal nature and is often driven by much more than the need for work. This thesis chapter will exam several of those key and crucial areas that are required to truly understand immigration in an attempt at providing a multifaceted picture of the issue at hand that can then help hone in on credible key issues that can be used to create a successful future U.S. immigration policy.

To understand the current state of immigration politics in the United States, in regards to Mexico, it's important to not only know but also understand the longstanding history between the two countries. Relations between the U.S. and Mexico can be seen as having started with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.¹ The U.S. took control of what is now much of the southwest United States and in so doing incorporated those native Mexicans into the U.S. Several scholars argue that current immigration discussions forget to discuss the fact that many of the U.S. Mexican

¹ Ramón A. Guitiérrez and Patricia Zavella, ed. Introduction to *Mexicans in California: Transformations and Challenges* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 1.

population has existed for over two centuries. The importance in this understanding is the effect these numbers have on social networking and immigration. Many scholars argue, and it will be discussed further in this thesis, that social networking is a large proponent of immigration from Mexico.

Understanding the long, unique, history Mexico and the U.S. have is important in understanding the current immigration debate. An issue that draws so much debate cannot be understood in its current context alone and be successfully debated into an adequate bilateral policy. Though it seems unusual to begin the understanding of Mexican immigration as far back as the 19th century it is important to understand the long standing history Mexico has with the U.S. because of their unique social, economic and political interrelations created throughout history. No other country in the world shares such a long border, has grown to depend on one another as economically as the U.S. and Mexico or share cultural staples to such an extent.

Mexicans have had to also fight for equality since they were forcefully integrated during the 1848 treaty and the overall issue of immigration is not only Mexican migrants contributions or lack there of, but their history with the U.S. that has negatively impacted their experiences socially and economically within the U.S. This forceful inclusion has set them apart from other immigrant groups because of the long standing racial tension this

caused well before immigration from Mexico truly started in large numbers in the early 20th century.² Mexican immigration has a unique history with the U.S., which has greatly affected their inclusion in society and still continues to show racial tensions that have since disappeared for many other migrating groups such as Eastern European immigrants. Mexican immigrants have had struggles to attain education, social acceptance, economic equality through high paying jobs or equal pay, and political rights. Further expansion on the effects of racial tension on the history of immigration from Mexico shows how the U.S. is dealing with a population that has in part been a part of the U.S. for over two centuries. This history uniquely ties the two countries well beyond a system of controlling borders and creates a unique historically social challenge that makes immigration policy that much more difficult.

Transnationalism

The difficulty Mexican immigrants have had in integrating into the U.S. on a level of true acceptance has also been a consequence of what many authors have recently explored and called transnationalism. The concept is used to describe the connection that immigrants maintain with their old country while also creating a new life in their new country. They remain connected through social and economic networks described as “failing to shed their old identities, to totally assimilate...living their lives and being quite involved in more than one nation, more than one world – in effect making the

² José Luis Morín, *Latino/a Rights and Justice in the United States: Perspectives and Approaches* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2009), 19-48.

home and adopted countries both one lived social world.”³ Transnationalism therefor is a cause for why the U.S. sees Mexican immigrants as not becoming part of the U.S. once they have migrated. That connection to their old country would make assimilation, a concept seen as becoming a true American, difficult and often creates tension when debating the concept of immigration and policy change involving those migrants already in the U.S.

Arguments on the other hand have also been made that transnationalism between Mexico and the U.S. creates a “migratory circuit” that is important and necessary for those on each side of the border. A primary example focuses on Monterrey and Houston discussed in further detail later, but can be applied to any migration from Mexico to the U.S. in which each country benefits from the other. Transnationalism has helped to include the original country in the debate about immigration because of the affect immigrants are having on maintaining social, political and economic ties with both countries.⁴ This however does not connect transnationalism with the effect of immigration on the U.S. or Mexico in terms of increasing or decreasing the numbers over time. That approach over time shows whether transnationalism is prevalent in high numbers of immigrants and if so how that affects their economic, social and political roles in both countries. With the ever-increasing prevalence of the Mexican population in the U.S. during

³ Silvia Pedraza, “Beyond Black and White: Latinos and Social Science Research on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America,” *Social Science History* 24, (24) (winter 2000): 710

⁴ Rubén Hernández-León, *Metropolitan Migrants: The Migration of Urban Mexicans to the United States* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 10-15.

recent years in the political mainstream this connection is most prevalent in determining long-term effects on migratory networks, which are vital to immigration.

History of Immigration

In order to further understand the connection and history between Mexico and the U.S. it's important to understand not only the social challenges, but also the immigration policy that once existed and to this present day does not exist. Changes have occurred in the U.S. over time through legislation that has either increased the number of immigrants or attempted to decrease the number.⁵ From 1848 to 1929 Mexicans passed between the U.S. and Mexican border without the need for documentation and the stigma of illegality. Prior to 1929 any immigration provisions that did exist were designed to primarily exclude other nationalities. In 1929 the first Immigration Act towards Mexico was passed restricting passage across the border to only those that had legal paperwork. The next step in U.S. Mexican immigration history came in the 1940s during WWII as the U.S. sought a need to fill its labor shortages with readily available Mexican workers. Close to 350,000 Mexican workers crossed the boarder annually during the programs duration.⁶ Next came the passage of the Bracero Program (1943-1964), discussed throughout most of the literature on Mexican immigration, and initiated after the depression and WWII as a means of

⁵ Michael B. Katz, Mark J. Stern, and Jamie J. Fader, "The Mexican Immigration Debate: A view form History," *Social Science History* 31 (2) (Summer 2007): 165-166

⁶ Tony Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars* (Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 54-55.

labor for the U.S. Its effect went well beyond economics and was also seen in the social networking that would ultimately help bring a steady, and increasing, stream of migrants across the boarder. When the program was canceled in the 1960s Mexico was in a state of rapid urbanization under an economy that could not keep up. This ultimately moved many workers now accustomed to readily available work in the U.S. to illegally cross the border and by 1986 there were between 4 to 5 million undocumented migrants in the U.S.⁷

In the 1980s the U.S. created its first real limits on Mexican immigration since the cancelation of the Bracero Program in 1964 by passing the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986. Ultimately this act made an attempt to limit immigration and in turn increased the number of undocumented immigrants who often did not return to Mexico.⁸ The act itself gave amnesty to almost 3 million undocumented migrants, created a system to “regularize the situation” with those already in the country, increased boarder patrolling, and penalized employers who hired undocumented workers.⁹ In the end the IRCA became a non-effective congressional measure that neither created a concrete U.S. immigration policy nor tackled the issue from the right angle. The act itself neglected to address the underling labor and economic issues at the heart of the immigration battle driving many

⁷ Pedraza, “Beyond Black and White,” 710

⁸ Katz, Stern and Fader, “The Mexican Immigration Debate,” 166.

⁹ Payan, *Border Wars*, 56

Mexican workers North in search of the work that had once been so readily accessible.¹⁰

Much of the literature argues that immigration from Mexico is not always intended as a permanent solution, but often times is a process by which to improve the current situation with the ultimate goal of one day returning “home”.¹¹ Data supports that theory by showing that prior to the 1970s most migration was temporary and for only short periods during programs such as the Bracero Program. Post IRCA in the 1980s return rates for many migrants declined, but then increased again into the 21st century. Migrant population numbers increased in large part due to established family-networking connections created by the IRCA in the 1980s with large numbers of legalized family in the U.S. sponsoring those abroad. Historically there are four main reasons for a lack of return migration that can help in understanding not only the issue but how best to approach a stable long standing policy reform; 1. Increases in “year-round urban employment”, 2. established Mexican communities exhibited and maintained “long-term growth”, 3. IRCA’s legalization increased family networking and 4. border enforcement.¹² Understanding how each interplays with the whole is crucial to understanding the uniqueness of Mexican migration.

¹⁰ Katz, Stern and Fader, “The Mexican Immigration Debate,” 165-166.

¹¹ Hernández-León, *Metropolitan Migrants*, 2.
Pedraza, “Beyond Black and White,” 697-726.

Frank D. Bean, Susan K. Brown, and Rubén G. Rumbaut, “Mexican Immigrant Political and Economic Incorporation.” *Perspectives on Politics, American Political Sciences Association* 4, (2006): 309-313.

¹² Agustín Escobar Latapí, ed., *Mexico-US Migration Management*. (Lexington Books: Rowman &

The Statistics of Immigration

Another component of understanding the debate comes from analyzing the numbers that currently flow in and out of the U.S. The statistical history of immigration to the U.S. is seen in the yearly *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* compiled by the Office of Immigration Statistics in Washington DC. The 2008 Yearbook showed that as far back as the 19th century Mexican immigrants have been arriving in the U.S. The yearbook also shows that during the 21st century the number of immigrants increased from all areas of the world, but Mexican immigrants remained the largest number. By 2007 28.8% of the U.S.' foreign-born population was from Mexico.¹³ The most important statistics noted in the Yearbook are the number of immigrants that became legal permanent residents or U.S. citizens.¹⁴ The numbers varied but as seen in table one below they show consistent numbers over the last 10 years.¹⁵ Though these numbers are low in comparison to other migrating groups at only 12.8 percent and 22.2 percent of the total naturalization figures in 2005 and 2011 it does show a steady increase.¹⁶ As will be discussed below these figures also coincide with a decrease in migration numbers after 2007. As migration numbers have declined naturalization

Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008.), 12-13.

¹³ Katz, Stern and Fader, "The Mexican Immigration Debate," 157.

¹⁴ United States. Department of Homeland Security. "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2008, 2011 & 2012", Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. <http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/yearbook.shtm>, 66-109 and 14, 55 and 55.

¹⁵ Payan, *Border Wars*, 56

¹⁶ Jonathan Fox, "Citizenship Trends: Growing Rates but Persistent Lags," in *Context Matters: Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement in Nine U.S. Cities*, Reports on Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement, National Report by Xóchitl Bada, Jonathan Fox, Robert Donnelly, and Andrew Selee (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 2010), 44.

numbers have increased, but do continue to lag behind other migrating populations. What is of importance is the notion that Mexican migrants do naturalize against the perceived popular notion that illegality is a mindset within the Mexican immigration debate.

<i>Table 1</i>	2002	2003	2005	2008	2011	2012
Legal Permanent Residency	218,822		161,445	189,989	143,446	
U.S. Citizens	76,310	55,946	77,089	231,815	94,783	102,181

The data in table one helps to support the notion that immigrants from Mexico do also become part of the U.S. legally in consistent numbers. They therefore contribute socially, economically and politically to the U.S. That in turn would mean that immigration is not an all-negative issue and should be looked at from all angles when considering how best to create a sustainable immigration policy. Another consideration is the actual growth or lack thereof of undocumented Mexican immigrants over the last 10 years. As of 2006 there were about 12 million Mexican-born residents in the U.S. In that same year there were estimates of 11.5 million undocumented residents with about 6.5 million of those Mexican immigrants making up about 57% of the total undocumented population.¹⁷ Though best estimates during this time put illegal immigration at a steady pace they do not account for migrants that come and go and in the full immigration debate neglect the percentage of

¹⁷ Latapi, *Migration Management*, 2-3.

migrants that arrive in the U.S. legally each year. As discussed before the 1990s saw a sharp increase in migration from Mexico due to the IRCA act of 1986 in which about 3 million Mexicans received amnesty. This in turn resulted in a large increase in family and social networking migration as the U.S. economy boomed and the IRCA failed to curtail much beyond further attempts at border enforcement.¹⁸

As of 2007 migration from Mexico has steadily declined with a net migration flow to the United States at almost zero. From 2007 to 2011 the number of unauthorized migrants in the U.S. fell from 7 million to about 6.1 million. While the number of immigrants to the U.S. from Mexico was at only 1.4 million from 2005 to 2010 compared to 3 million from 2000 to 2005. The cause and effect of the decline is still not fully understood, but the complex relationship between both countries economically has played a large part as the U.S. economic crisis played a major role.¹⁹ While numbers have dropped they still remain the highest among all migrating groups to the U.S. facilitating the necessity for policy reform that understands the uniqueness of Mexican migration discussed further below.

Social Networking

Beyond understanding the history and statistics of Mexican immigration it is also important to understand the social networking that has

¹⁸ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁹ Jeffrey S. Passel, D’Vera Cohn and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, “Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero – and Perhaps Less,” *Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project* <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/23/net-migration-from-mexico-falls-to-zero-and-perhaps-less/> (accessed May 3, 2014).

driven much of the issue and forged a unique bond between families from both sides of the border. It is often described as the basis for why and how migration occurs between both countries. As just discussed above social networking is an important and necessary component of Mexican immigration since migration between both countries is “the largest sustained flow of migrant workers in the contemporary world” with more than 98% of all Mexican migrants going strictly to the U.S.²⁰ The connection between both countries is uniquely different from any other in that 25% of all Mexicans have visited or lived in the U.S., 11 million Mexicans (11% of the Mexican population) lived in the U.S. in 2005 while about 400,000 Mexicans become a part of the U.S. population each year. This does not include an additional 16.8 million people of Mexican origin who were born and are living in the U.S.²¹

Historically social ties became very apparent and important after the Bracero Program from 1942 to 1964. The program itself allowed for the establishment of family ties within the U.S. that would fuel future generations. Pre-1940 migrants had a 0% probability of having a migrant parent in the U.S. while between 1965-1982 that number jumped to 52.9% in rural communities and 20.7% in urban communities.²² Migratory connections created during this time set the groundwork for a unique system that ebbs

²⁰ David Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants: How Mexico Manages Its Migration* (University of California Press, Ltd., 2009), 5-6.

²¹ David Jacobson, ed. *The Immigration Reader: America in a Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), 207.

²² Jacobson, *Immigration Reader*, 207.

and flows like supply and demand. As long as there are connections in the U.S. there will be a supply from Mexico to not only meet that demand but also fulfill that need to reconnect any social ties severed when one or more members of the family make the journey north legally or illegally.

There is also a growing connection between economic and outside social connections that have taken over for family connections in terms of networking. Social networking is one of the main causes of immigration that help explain why it continues during times of economic prosperity in the sending country and economic decline in the receiving country. For example during the 1970s immigration continued at high numbers while Mexico prospered economically and the U.S. experienced high unemployment.²³ The same is not necessarily true in reverse when the receiving country is in decline. The U.S. and Mexico are so economically connected that when the U.S. suffered its recent economic hardships Mexico did as well and instead of seeing a sharp increase in migration there was not only a decrease as discussed previously, but there were fewer petitions for legal migration after 2008 as proven in table one above. With social networking at play it is important to note that Mexico has had and continues to have the highest number of immigrants in the U.S. With this in mind, and considering the effects the economy has on migration flows, it can be inferred that continually higher numbers of immigrants come from Mexico simply because of the already high numbers of established networks in place that allow for a

²³ Ibid., 200-214.

concrete foothold. While it does not deter those who come on their own it is a much safer scenario when a migrant has a social or economic network to rely on when making the journey across the border.

Another aspect of networking can be seen in the reliance and dependence the network itself has created on both sides of the border. A prime example previously mentioned is with the cities of Monterrey in Mexico and Houston in the U.S. The border that separates the cities is described as a migratory circuit of goods, people and information. Networking has become important in the flow between the two cities, but not as much a factor in migration from one to the other. While networking is important migration has not become a primary connection and instead a different form of dependence has been created across the border.²⁴ In turn a migratory network works together to facilitate the needs of each side of the border. Immigrants provide economic employment in the U.S. and their connection to those still in Monterrey provides economic stability there through remittances and the constant flow of employment opportunities from one side to the other.

Gender Migration

Discussions of immigration policy cannot go any further without also understanding the social aspects in terms of male and female migration and the why and how they are migrating to the U.S. The differences in migration between men and women rely heavily on networking and are driven by

²⁴ Hernández-León, *Metropolitan Migrants*, 2

varying factors. Men are more likely to migrate internationally while Mexican women tend to migrate within Mexico and rarely internationally due to social challenges that include “patriarchal restrictions.”²⁵ Young, single, low educated men tend to make undocumented trips to the U.S. at higher numbers.²⁶ Often male migration dominates because it “conforms to gender norms” and is more cost-efficient than having the female head of household migrate.²⁷ Males dominate the migrating statistics at about 70 to 80% while women only reached about 45% from the 1990s through the beginning of the 21st Century. In documenting these statistics women tend to be captured in U.S. data that showed long-term stay while men tend to circulate either back and forth or only stay in the U.S. for short amounts of time. In a 2002 survey 66% of women versus 52% of men had not returned to Mexico after a year and a half in the U.S. This in turn showed an increasing number of women positively contributing to the U.S. socially, economically and politically over time at higher numbers than men.²⁸

Migrating women often face social stigmas that lead to female migration. The cultural differences in Mexico restrict the role of women as wife and mother, which in turn often pushes young women to migrate to the U.S. in hopes of economic prosperity and social freedom. The reasons for

²⁵ Sara Curran and Estela Rivero-Fuentes, “Engendering Migrant Networks: The Case of Mexican Migration.” *Demography* 40 (2) (May 2003): 289-307.

²⁶ Elizabeth Fussell, “Sources of Mexico’s Migration Stream: Rural, Urban, and Border Migrants to the United States.” *Social Forces* 82 (3) (March 2004): 937-967.

²⁷ Latapi, *Migration Management*, 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

migration also center on social standing.²⁹ Women from urban areas migrate because of the “role of gender on their careers, sexuality and violence.” Middle-class women from the cities on the other hand migrate in response to economic decline.³⁰ While in many cases undocumented women tend to migrate strictly based on the economic effects of globalization. Women tend to be very different when looked at from trends in migration. They are usually “younger, less mobile and more dependent on social networks and family ties.”³¹ Most are between the ages of 15 to 24, only about 20% are independent migrants, and only about 51% migrated in search of work compared to 92% of men.²⁶ Social ties greatly influence female migration from Mexico putting a different spin on the debate over jobs within the immigration political debate. Social networking within gender migration is a much higher influence then job seeking and in so doing forces a different understanding of why immigration occurs.

This disparity in gender migration is a topic that needs to be further analyzed when discussing a true and successful immigration policy. It is an area of immigration that is not always discussed in detail and explains how immigration has changed in the last ten to twenty years. Connections to prior male migrants for men increased the likelihood of international migration but did not determine it while for women the connection with a previously

²⁹ María de la Luz Ibarra, “Buscando La Vida: Mexican Immigrant Women’s Memories of Home, Yearning, and Border Crossings.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 24, (2&3) (2003): 261-264.

³⁰ Ibarra, “Buscando La Vida,” 265.

³¹ Latapi, *Migration Management*, 20.

migrated female was crucial in facilitating international migration.³² Female migration was also highly connected to family networking and the idea of reunification or the understanding that any migration would not be done alone. These conclusions are more important than other factors that lead to gender specific migration. The connections in the U.S. are highly driven based on gender, which draws a new understanding on the immigration debate.

Further analysis of gender migration also leads to a discussion of past and current gender specific labor and educational trends once in the U.S. Mexican women often resemble U.S. white women in occupation attainment and are at a higher likelihood of upward economic and social mobility than Mexican men. Mexican women are described as occupying the white-collar sector by the year 2000.³³ This would lend toward upward work force mobility toward administrative and managerial positions. This speaks to the tendency of higher migration numbers in higher educated Mexican women. Though overall Mexican migrants tend to be less educated with only about 13% of Mexican adults completing a high school education in the U.S. Mexican women tend to do much better with a higher percentage completing a college education. Further analysis of educated women also shows that higher educated Mexican women, MA and PhDs, reside in the U.S. at 29 and 39%.

³² Curran and Rivero-Fuentes, "Engendering Migrant Networks," 303.

³³ Katz, Stern and Fadar, "The Mexican Immigration Debate,"

Social Effects in the U.S. Due to Immigration

Another important aspect of immigration is the effect it has on the receiving country and its immigrants from one generation to the next. Understanding the propensity of migrants from Mexico to naturalize and how that has an effect on subsequent generations is important in understanding social networks. The assumption is that Mexican immigrants do not tend to naturalize over time.³⁴ Statistical data seen in the table above shows that they in fact do naturalize and have done so at increasing numbers over time. Mexican immigrants are unique in their analysis because such a high percentage originally arrived on a temporary basis with the intention of returning to Mexico. Mexican migrants have been naturalizing at lower numbers than other immigrating groups, but when analyzed within the context of why Mexican migrants come to the U.S. it falls within the notion of seeking temporary work with the notion of one day returning home.³⁵ They are however seeking legal status at consistent rates. An analyzes of 1st generation immigrants from thirty to thirty-five years ago showed that by 2004 only one-eighth of all Mexican immigrants would still be illegal immigrants.¹⁹

The increase of naturalization among first generation immigrants results in the ability to reach higher education by each subsequent generation and is a primary reason why first generation immigrants seek

³⁴ Bean, Brown, and Rumbaut, "Political and Economic Incorporation," 310.

³⁵ Fox, "Citizenship Trends", 44.

naturalization. It can be taken a step farther by connecting economic success with levels of education among increasing generations. However, as discussed before Mexican immigrants have not obtained the same level of social and economic equality as previous white immigrants. Their increase in access to education has occurred over time but has not brought forth a level of social equality experienced by other immigrant groups.³⁶ Subsequent generations that have obtained middle class standing have fought for true equality among their white counterparts. Much of that struggle occurs within first generation naturalized migrants who often come from largely poor families and now struggle toward social and economic upward mobility in an environment that creates both “class and ethnic boundaries”.³⁷ Each generation is now faced with obstacles that are racially and historically based while dealing with the inherent struggles of striving for success in a culture that demands assimilation as a pass for inclusion. Social acceptance and upward economic and social mobility is often obtained and more readily accepted by middle class Mexican migrants when they are attune to white middle class standards of social acceptance.³⁸ With these barriers in place it is inherently obvious that any immigration policy needs to address not only the always debated border issue, but also the now established social issues engrained in

³⁶ Katz, Stern and Fader, “The Mexican Immigration Debate,” 164-165.

³⁷ Jody Agius Vallejo, “The Mexican Origin Middle Class in Los Angeles.” Center for the Study of Immigration Integration: University of Southern California. 3

³⁸ Vallejo, “The Mexican Origin,” 4.

creating social acceptance for those immigrants already in the U.S.

Economic Causes – NAFTA

The next important aspect in understanding immigration is in exploring the economic factors that affect not only the cause and effect, but also help fuel an understanding of why previous attempts have not worked at curtailing migratory flows. The first important major bilateral economic policy affecting migration from Mexico is NAFTA. The North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, was implemented in 1994 by the U.S., Canada and Mexico as a means of creating open trade between all three countries.

NAFTA itself had both an economic and political angle that rooted its attempt at long-term success. Economically NAFTA would liberalize trade, equalize prices and above all create a free flow of goods and capital with the ultimate goal of higher wages and jobs within Mexico. This ultimately would be aimed at benefiting Mexico above the U.S. or Canada and politically, from both the U.S. and Mexican perspective, would reduce the migratory reasons surrounding the lack of work and low wages that were often seen as prevailing reasons why Mexicans crossed the border.³⁹

Between the 1980s and mid 1990s Mexican manufacturing productivity growth was -1 to -2 percent.⁴⁰ Analysis of the agreement shows that in fact NAFTA increased trade between the countries and productivity in Mexico resulting in several economic improvements within Mexico at the

³⁹ Latapí, *Migration Management*, 33.

⁴⁰ Ernesto López-Córdova, “NAFTA and Manufacturing Productivity in Mexico,” *Economia* 4 (1) (2003): 55.

time. If the agreement had not been implemented Mexico's productivity level would only be 2.5% lower in 2000 than under the agreement.⁴¹ Trade between Mexico and the U.S. quadrupled to about 81% of Mexican exports while foreign direct investment by the U.S. rose to 40%.⁴² In recent years exports have become a third of Mexico's GDP due to agreements such as NAFTA and an emphasis on foreign direct investment has shifted to domestic investment by Mexican companies.⁴³ U.S. exports reached about 12% second only to Canada. As a result of NAFTA a quarter of the U.S. economy became tied to the relationship with Mexico through jobs that became dependent directly on their commercial relationship.⁴⁴

Analysis beyond that of the years surrounding the implementation of NAFTA however showed varying effects. The increase in productivity was not as high as would be expected after the U.S. became the biggest trader of goods with Mexico. This reinforced conclusions that in the end the NAFTA agreement did not improve Mexico's economy beyond that of other Latin American countries.⁴⁵ Long-term growth was actually observed at lower levels than other Latin American countries but increased living standards were noted together with a slight narrowing of the income gap between both

⁴¹ López-Córdova, "NAFTA," 88.

⁴² Andrew Selee and Alberto Díaz-Cayeros, "The Dynamics of US-Mexican Relations," in *Mexico & The United States: The Politics of Partnership*, ed. Peter Smith and Andrew Selee (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 38.

⁴³ Andrew Selee, "A Changing Mexico." *Journal of International Affairs* 66 (2) (Spring/Summer 2013): 118.

⁴⁴ Selee and Díaz-Cayeros, "The Dynamics of US-Mexican Relations," 42.

⁴⁵ William Easterly, Norbert Fiess and Daniel Lederman, "NAFTA and Convergence in North America: High Expectations, Big Events, Little Time." *Economia* 4 (1) (2003): 1-53.

Mexico and the United States.⁴⁶ The economic changes Mexico experience within its new found reliance on the U.S. economy also spurred an increase in migration rather than a decline intended through the implementation of the policy itself. As wages stalled in Mexico the U.S. saw an economic upturn that drew migrants north at an ever increasing rate until a decline began in 2005.⁴⁷

A lack of well-rounded economic prosperity that benefits all is often a leading factor of immigration and based on the lack of full success the NAFTA agreement did not fully accomplish its goal of minimizing Mexican immigration to the U.S. after 1994. Earnings increased but wage disparities continued and migration saw an extensive upswing as a result. As will be discussed in chapter three Mexico remains one of the countries with the highest inequality levels in the region.

Remittances

Another important economic effect of immigration crucially important in understanding the underlying connection between why immigration is often rooted in not only social networks but economic stability and the fundamental need to provide for ones family is the ever dominating effect of remittances.

The economic effects of immigration on the sending country can be seen in remittance amounts from migrants actively participating in their new

⁴⁶ Selee, "A Changing Mexico," 119

⁴⁷ Selee and Díaz-Cayeros, "The Dynamics of US-Mexican Relations," 43.

location. The effect on the Mexican economy can be seen from 1990 to 2004 as remittances rose from 3.6 billion to 16.6 billion per year. The obvious conclusion is that remittances grew as migration numbers grew, but economic factors within the two countries also played a role. Economic decline in the U.S. often reflected lower remittances to Mexico. Other factors explain the increase even in economic decline. One is the increase in immigrants who stayed permanently in the U.S. and therefore increased their amount of remittances to Mexico. A second factor is the affect of transnational networks that rely on connections between immigrants and their home country.⁴⁸ As discussed above transnationalism is a means of connection between immigrants and their home institution. The growing number of remittances suggest that this connect is strong and necessary for economic prosperity in Mexico and fuels the continual ebb and flow of migration from Mexico to the U.S. With the continual need for labor in the U.S. and the continual supply of laborers in Mexico looking not only for work, but a means of providing for those they leave behind this economic connection remains a strong pull factor that needs to be considered when determining a sustainable immigration policy that will benefit both sides of the border.

Future Immigration Policy

No true sustainable or complete immigration policy has been passed in the U.S. since the mid-20th century. The Bracero Program previously

⁴⁸ Mariano Sana, "Growth of Migrant Remittances from the United States to Mexico, 1990-2004," *Social Forces* 86 (3) (March 2008): 1009-1017.

discussed was the last true policy that aimed at creating a system that tracked and controlled those crossing the border at a sustainable rate. With the end of the program the U.S. saw the end of true immigration policy that made any effort to understand, control or improve on congressional acts that soon followed in an attempt to curtail the ever growing inflow of illegal immigrants on one end and an ever broken legal system on the other. Recent years have seen the result of what was just discussed as an ever growing Mexican population in the U.S. that is not only ever present in social and cultural mainstream, but is increasingly participating in the economy and political system. This new increase in numbers and demand for participation has created the first real push and need for immigration policy in recent decades.

The "Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013" was recently introduced as a U.S. policy to address the "root causes" of immigration.⁴⁹ The act focuses on a lengthy set of complex provisions and improvements that can be summarized as including a standard border protection through fencing, added personnel and penalties for unauthorized crossing, updating a worker visa program, creating an opportunity for legal residency for those already in the country through establish penalty provisions and creating a lengthy list of provisions for both

⁴⁹ Douglas Goodman, "Immigration Reform 2013: Gang Of 8 Plan Released, Here is What is in it," *Polycymic*. <http://www.polycymic.com/articles/35671/immigration-reform-2013-gang-of-8-plan-released-here-is-what-is-in-it>

legal and illegal immigration.³⁷ As a whole the policy resembles the IRCA in many ways making future success limited.

The act itself has not yet passed into law and if it does would be the first real push for policy change, however it lacks a true understanding of how to deal with the issues at hand in order to be considered a solid policy reform. As this chapter emphasized immigration from Mexico is more than just crossing a border illegally. The push and pull effects are dynamic and have a long standing history that is unique to Mexican-U.S. relations that then affect social and economic factors which work together to influence immigration. Immigration is much more dynamic and complicated and to fully understand the “root causes” you have to look at each of those underlying factors individually and then as a whole. Historical context, social networking, gender migration, employment, remittances, country specific economic influences all play important roles in Mexican immigration to the U.S. These are all true root causes of immigration that need to be considered when formulating an immigration policy that can fully address the entire issue. Ignoring these does little to improve our understanding of why so many take the trip north and how each country can make its own improvements to stem the flow.

The current attempt at immigration policy tries to address the issues once they have already been created without focusing on understanding and dealing with those that have plagued past policies and can be prevented in

the future if addressed intelligently. This policy as written makes a good effort but falls short of success. A closer look at three key areas of the act shows that policy makers have a long way to go in understanding how to create a well-rounded policy. The first area is Title I, which focuses on border security through an increase in border patrol officers, fencing, and surveillance.⁵⁰ As previously discussed enforcement of the border through congressional oversight has done little to curtail illegal immigration alone and especially while other, stronger, mitigating factors such as social networking and economic effects on either side continued to push migrants north. This continues to be a misunderstood aspect of illegal immigration that will continue to impede true successful policy until congressional understanding takes place in which all involved realize that making the wall higher will only create a further divide between the two countries. While an open border is not the solution it needs to be understood that a free flowing system would create better success once it's universally understood that not all migrants aim to stay long term and their economic success benefits both the U.S. and Mexico.

A second provision of the act focuses on an agricultural worker program, which has not had a current counterpart since the end of the Bracero Program in the 1960s. Under this program current immigrants in

⁵⁰ Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act. Bill Summary & Status, 113th Congress (2013-2014), S744, All Information. From Library of Congress Thomas Home, Bill Resolutions. <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d113:SN00744:@@@L&summ2=m&> (accessed June 6, 2013). 2

the U.S. would only be eligible for a worker visa if they met lengthy criteria eligibility available only as a “Registered Provisional Immigrant”.⁵¹ The provision also establishes a nonimmigrant agricultural worker program with the creation of a W3 and W4 visa but puts a five-year limit with annual adjustments based on economic and labor demands with the possibility of one extension.⁵² The policy in this regards does a good job of understanding the need for a worker program in the U.S. to satisfy the ever present need for labor on the U.S. side and demand on the Mexican side. What this portion of the policy neglects is the creation of a long-term worker program. The need is always there and implementing a capstone will only increase the push for extensions and in the end will lead to works that not only overstay their visas but also ultimately do not return to Mexico because of their inability to return to the U.S. for work. Solid political policy needs to address the demands now and foresee those in the future.

The final provision is not only relevant to the information addressed in this thesis but also to understanding why the policy itself will not be sustainable is called the Provision of Future Immigration. The provision creates a “merit based” system in which the first four years of the policy allow for visas to only be issued to skilled workers in specific professions. The next four years allow for only what is discussed as tier one and tier two visas. Tier one visas accrue points based on several factors including current

⁵¹ Border Security, 4-5.

⁵² Ibid.

employment, age, ability to speak English, country of origin and family relationships.⁵³ Tier two is not specified nor is the amount of merit points needed to acquire either status for visa eligibility. The systems flaws lie in its restrictions of eligibility based on skills and background that do not hone in on the biggest immigrating group coming from Mexico. Without focusing the policy on economic and social factors relevant to this particular group the policy is neglecting to truly address immigration. Large portions of immigrants from Mexico are low skilled and non-English speakers that will not qualify enough points quickly enough for legal migration.

As a large component of this portion of the policy family based immigration limits will increase. In doing so policy makers are missing the key immigrating theme of social networking. Post IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act) in the 1980s amnesty was granted to almost 3 million Mexicans resulting in a sharp increasing in migrating numbers both legal and illegal as social networking became a major connection for Mexicans wishing to come to the U.S. The implementation of this new 2013 policy will result in a grander result as estimates show that as many as 33 million migrants will be granted green card status within the first 10 years of the policy.⁵⁴ The cyclical pattern of immigration will continue at a grander scale as social networking exponential increases if the effects of each of these provisions are not adequately understood.

⁵³ Ibid., 5-6.

⁵⁴ Mark Krikorian, "The Rubio Amnesty," *National Review* 65 (9) (May 20, 2013) *MasterFILE Premier*, EBSCOhost: 28.

Conclusion

The topic of Mexican immigration and its causes and effects can be better understood when looking at aspects beyond border control. A stronger focus on gender and social networking effects within the context of strong pulls toward migration help in understanding today's strong immigration issue and in turn will help in understanding how to properly control it. However, none of this can be analyzed without an understanding of the history between the U.S. and Mexico. In the long run it has created a foundation of knowledge that has been rarely utilized when determining strong immigration policy that can withstand not only time, but also the changing dynamics of Mexican migration. Centuries worth of social, economic and political interactions have not lead to a better understanding between the U.S. and Mexico in terms of migration as seen by the lack of a concrete immigration policy, sustainable reduction in illegal migration and or a fundamental understanding of the issue as a whole.

Unique social, economic and political themes weave throughout Mexican immigration and show a dynamic issue that has existed since a combination of economic opportunity and social networking became a fabric of U.S.-Mexican relations from one generation to the next. The implementation of the Bracero Program and the passage of the IRCA created a strong web of one-sided migration both legal and illegal. As connections on the U.S. side grew networks grew and opportunities for migration became

evermore abundant while Mexico struggled to create an environment of economic security for its citizens. NAFTA proved to be a worthwhile thought, but in the end was driven more by the notions of political ideals in terms of trade liberalization resulting in spontaneous economic prosperity. Both countries saw the opportunity of opening the border to goods as the magic solution to immigration without considering the underlying push and pull factors already at play. Economic prosperity in Mexico would potentially decrease a percentage of immigrants to the U.S., but would not stem the flow completely as the country struggled to narrow the wage gap. Remittances on the other hand have shown a bilateral effect that often benefits both sides of the border and should be an area of further study and understanding when discussing the “why” of immigration.

As seen in the data and analysis above labor demands are not the only pull for Mexican immigrants to the United States. Social networking and long standing family ties have greatly influenced migration from Mexico. The unique history and connection Mexican families have are crucial to understanding the constant flow during times of economic prosperity and decline on either side of the border. As those network connections showed above ties are more important to women and help in establishing a network of circulator migration that is dependent on strong connections in the United States. With those connections continually growing a slow down in Mexican immigration is unlikely to continue or be affected by the implementation of a

new immigration policy that does not tackle any of the underlying major themes discussed in this thesis and instead sets up for a system of expanding migration.

Border control, fees and visa modification are the primary focuses of the new immigration policy proposed in 2013. While this will streamline and most importantly create a policy that currently doesn't exist it will not address any of the most important factors mentioned. Creating an ever expanding fence between Mexico and the U.S. will not curtail illegal immigration if the pull from the other side is reinforced by lack of stability and social or economic mobility at home.

Transnationalism, naturalization, social networking, gender migration, NAFTA, and remittances all overlap and interplay when understanding the complexities of immigration. While it would be easy to focus on one it's important to understand the interplay between all when attempting to create a successful immigration policy in the near future. Economic effects fuel a need to immigrate while social networking strengthens the choice and security in destination. Future successful immigration policy requires a true multifaceted look at immigration in order to create a process that works not only for the United States, but also for any Mexican immigrant wishing to migrate to the U.S.

Chapter 2

Foreign Policy & Immigration

Bilateral Cooperation is a Must for Successful Future Policy Implementation

Mexico and the United States have a long unique history that has made them dependent on each other economically and politically. The choice one makes often affects the other in such a way that mutual cooperation must become the necessity for political understanding across the border. It has become ever apparent that foreign policy decisions on both sides of the border require cooperation in order to have long lasting success. In order to have a better understanding of the political decisions made in both the United States and Mexico it is important to understand how each side addresses and structures its foreign policy issues and agendas.

This chapter will breakdown and discuss the structure of foreign policy itself within the framework of immigration within both countries. It will also examine and discuss the key policies that have in turn helped shape current immigration policies in the U.S. and Mexico that have then shown several instances of missed opportunities for mutual cooperation that could have led to effective policy successes on both sides. Several key elements will also be discussed to help in understanding recent foreign policy within both countries that have played a contributing factor to why there still remains a unilateral approach toward discussions on politically dominating issues such as immigration. Key foreign policy during historical time periods within each administration in the U.S. and Mexico from the 1900s to the present have

reflected a changing dynamic in which unilateral policies often become bilateral agendas that are driven by key changes in political, economic and social dynamics crucial to understanding why each has temporarily succeeded, created tension or ultimately failed to create true immigration reform that in the end could benefit long term success on both sides of the border.

The complexity of the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico surrounding immigration lies within the scope of the history they share as well as the nature of the issue itself within each country. Mexico has often taken a non-dominant role in regards to immigration policy while the U.S. has struggled to set aside domestic political agendas driven by varying influences from Congress, DOD, and state and local governments among others. The issue has become a complex “mixture of foreign and domestic policy”, interdependency and asymmetry creating a system in which bilateral discussions exist but policy is set in a unilateral manner with the U.S. as the policy holder and Mexico often dependent on the outcome.⁵⁵ This relationship has created a foreign policy dynamic that is dependent on a U.S. political system only willing to address one particular issue at a time while curtailing the continued mistrust that runs across both borders. This in turn has forced a system in which both the U.S. and Mexico continue to play the same roles in the foreign policy debate surrounding issues such as immigration.

⁵⁵ Selee and Díaz-Cayeros, “The Dynamics of US-Mexican Relations,” 37-39

U.S.-Mexican Dynamics

An understanding of how each side of the border determines and implements its foreign policy and in turn views its role in doing so is important in continuing to understand the dynamics of U.S.-Mexican relations. One often dominates the other while a lack of concrete enforcement, mistrust and ever changing leadership agendas have often shifted well-intentioned focus on policies that benefit both sides, but require mutual cooperation for true success. Immigration is an area in which such factors have often dominated a debate about who should do what, when and how between the U.S. and Mexico along its miles of shared border. The U.S. has often played a leading role in setting policy agendas which have often been viewed through a Mexican lens of suspicion based on historical interactions that date back centuries and have created an environment in which political decisions are often dotted with social stigma. An understanding of current immigration policy in the U.S. requires an understanding beyond that of the country's foreign policy with its neighbor, which too often dominates its entire immigration policy agenda. A review of the key periods of Mexican immigration in U.S. history shows a parallel to changes in immigration policy within the U.S. and when further analyzed often shows a cause and affect dynamic previously discussed in this thesis in relation to the topic of immigration. Within the last 20 years the U.S. has had three presidential White House agendas that have varied in their foreign

policy agendas toward Mexico that have each uniquely contributed to the policies now in place. U.S. foreign policy toward Mexico in relation to immigration has evolved as immigration has become an ever-increasing debate in U.S. mainstream and politics.

When considering U.S. foreign policy and immigration it's important to consider the history the U.S. has had with Mexico when trying to determine if bilateral cooperation is a possibility. As history has shown much of the U.S. immigration policy has been geared toward Mexican migrants in such a way that tensions have arisen on the other side of the border over proper treatment. The U.S. has often taken it upon themselves to establish policies that attempt to impose changes that do not take into account Mexico or any of the push/pull factors of Mexican migration. Successful foreign policy requires an understanding of the other country and in relation to Mexico requires the ability to create a system of true bilateral policy and implementation that will hold both sides accountable.

The United States strategy and response to Mexico's foreign policy is at a unique point between changing administrations and a renewed rise of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Any significant threat from Mexico long ago disappeared and true conflict hasn't been seen in modern times. Mexico's foreign policy has not varied much since the country's revolution. The U.S. has remained a constant backdrop to policy decisions and a leader in its policy direction. Such an asymmetrical relationship has

limited Mexico's ability to create its own substantial foreign policy agenda and has geared both countries toward the need for bilateral cooperation in order to address issues that affect both sides of the border. How the United States takes the change in Mexico's administration, the growing unease with Americans over immigration and border security and turns them into a concrete foreign policy is yet to be seen. The issue however should become central and much more of a focus in both domestic and foreign U.S. policy. Mexico's foreign policy affects the U.S. on a daily basis the same way the U.S.' policy on Mexico affects Mexicans. The countries are so intertwined that Americans need to be presented with the understanding that strides toward policy changes need to come not from border closures, but from bilateral cooperation and concrete changes that will benefit both sides.

Domestic vs. Foreign Policy Strategy and History

The immigration debate in the U.S. stems from several factors that are not often discussed, but are often contributing factors which need to be understood in order to create an effective system to understand, prevent, and effectively control both legal and illegal immigration. The U.S. and Mexico have a long history of social, economic and political interactions that have made them dependent on each other and have created an interesting dynamic in which Mexican culture has become an ever present part of the U.S. as Mexican numbers in the country have grown. These growing numbers have begun to play a role in leading a push and pull factor during recent key

political agendas in the U.S. that have then driven immigration policy. The important dynamic in this is the switch this has from a foreign to a domestic issue when discussed in the context of Mexico within the U.S. Domestic issues in the U.S. have often been “driven” by Latin America in the last two decades and have focused on issues such as “trade, immigration, drugs and guns.”⁵⁶ Much of this has been driven by increased interactions as trade has increased by 82% from 1998 to 2009 and Latinos now represent 15% of the U.S. population.⁵⁷ In this same context Mexicans represented about 6 million undocumented aliens in the U.S. in 2005 which equaled about half the total 12 million in the country at that time.⁵⁸ The U.S. shift in policy definition and understanding is important in the U.S.-Mexican immigration debate because it points to a unique interaction that has often created a focus on domestic policy rather than foreign policy. U.S. policy interactions with Mexico have fallen into the realm of domestic issues when they should remain foreign policy and away from the debate and confusion of domestic issues. While the uniqueness of the U.S.-Mexican relationship and proximity should be taken into account it is also important that policies such as security and immigration fall into the realm of foreign policy to not only be effective but to keep them from becoming issues that are dominated by domestic agendas.

⁵⁶ Julia Sweig, “Getting Latin America Right,” *The National Interest* (January/February 2013): 23.

⁵⁷ Sweig, “Getting Latin America Right,” 23.

⁵⁸ Steven Hook, ed., *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*, (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011), 394-395.

Foreign Policy Structure – U.S. & Mexico

In order to understand why the U.S. has established certain foreign policy avenues with Mexico over immigration it is important to understand some of the structure behind foreign policy making in the United States. The U.S. system of establishing and implementing foreign policy includes the Presidency (White House), Congress and the remainder of the executive branch. Within this system the White House and Congress choose which “goals” and agendas “fit” the country at the time and provide the funding to do so while providing the legislation to implement those policies. The complex and “needy” U.S. bureaucratic system often also dictates and guides what foreign policy avenues the White House takes as does the usual economic and political constraints from the U.S. economy and congressional pushback.⁵⁹ Each administration, presidency, is often forced to, at one point or another, follow congressional resistance in terms of foreign policy agendas. While they often still dictate which items are most important to them it is often a struggle to battle the bureaucracy in place. The presidencies of the last twenty years, which include Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, have all felt the struggle to balance personal foreign policy agendas with those of Congress, political opinion, and issues of importance to state and local governments as well as agencies such as the DHS and DOD. All three presidents have been at the forefront of important policy changes

⁵⁹ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 171-172.

between the U.S. and Mexico in terms of immigration and while their agendas were not all the same the notion of border security became a main issue for each foreign policy agenda. Though each made an attempt at curbing the immigration issue neither implemented a successful bilateral approach or a successful overall reform due in part to the constraints put in place by a system that struggled to set aside outside agendas.

Bilateral cooperation can only be achieved if the foreign policy of both sides is understood and especially as to why Mexico is so often inclined to refuse to intervene from their side of the border. In the late 19th, early 20th century Mexican policy “rested...in a highly centralized and powerful presidency.”⁶⁰ The structure of foreign policy decisions in Mexico rests primarily with the President, some with the Senate, and is often guided by their preferences, but in recent years has involved the input of a foreign minister and outside influences.⁶¹ In the U.S. the presidency also often dominates what issues are focused on since they too have the strongest pull in foreign policy decision making. President to president interaction, cooperation and understanding dominates foreign policy discussions between Mexico and the U.S. but the “framework” of bilateral relations rest with the U.S. State Department and the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Relations

⁶⁰ Jorge Domínguez, “Mexico’s New Foreign Policy: States, Societies, and Institutions,” in *Bridging the Border: Transforming Mexico-US Relations*, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997), 184.

⁶¹ Domínguez, “Mexico’s New Foreign Policy,” 193.

(SRE). To add to the complexity other agencies handle the day-to-day issues with agencies on both sides actively involved in policy.⁶²

On the other hand is the current Mexican foreign policy goal, which is not much different than that established after the Mexican revolution. Sovereignty was of utmost importance at that time as was a policy that had a “...commitment to self-determination, nonintervention, and peaceful conflict resolution...of it’s own interests and in its treatment of foreign powers.”⁶³ Mexico’s history with the U.S. and other countries during the 19th century made it a country often unwilling to look beyond its borders politically or militarily especially if it affected national sovereignty. Its proximity to the U.S. has also had a tremendous effect on its “worldview”.⁶⁴ The process of Mexico’s foreign policy is lead by the executive branch with some authority granted to the Senate by the constitution. Mexico’s foreign policy is described as a “bilateral” policy not only with the U.S., but in recent years also with other Latin American countries and Asia.⁶⁵ Between 1960-1990 Mexico focused on a foreign policy that emphasized national sovereignty and nonintervention, but relied heavily on its relationship with the United States having created a long held political and economic history. This included an

⁶² Selee and Díaz-Cayeros, “The Dynamics of US-Mexican Relations,” 47.

⁶³ Emily Edmonds-Poli and David A. Shirk, *Contemporary Mexican Politics*. 2nd Edition (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2012), 275.

⁶⁴ Sweig, “Getting Latin America Right,” 23.

⁶⁵ Edmonds-Poli and David Shirk, *Contemporary Mexican Politics*, 277.

alliance of sorts during WWII and the creation of a worker/visa program from 1942-1964 discussed in more detail in chapter one and touched on below.⁶⁶

History of Immigration and Policy

Migration from Mexico to the U.S. has had four main time periods of foreign policy importance that have either been a result of policies or resulted from a policy change. As discussed previously in this thesis Mexican migration is relatively “new” to the U.S. It wasn’t until about the 1920s that Mexicans migrated to the U.S. under the first guest worker program during WWI. Prior to the 1920s immigration from Mexico was at a very small percentage and was almost always for a short-term stay. Next came the Bracero Program (1942 to 1964) created as a bilateral guest worker program that began during WWII as a means to fill open jobs and resulted in 4.6 million guest worker visas. The program was terminated in 1964 and resulted in an increase in illegal immigration as already established social networks were in place from previous Bracero migrants that then encouraged and opened opportunities for illegal immigration. This continued as “social and economic” affects on both sides of the border caused a push and pull effect that brought Mexican migrants to the U.S. at a rate that doubled every decade from 1970 on.⁶⁷

By 1986 congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in response to the growing number of migrants in the U.S. and as a

⁶⁶ Ibid., 294-297.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 277.

result granted amnesty to almost 3 million Mexicans.⁶⁸ By doing so the ever-growing social network discussed in chapter one that often dominates migration was expanded to encourage both illegal and legal migration, which included family reunification. By 2012 the Mexican-born population in the U.S. was about 11.7 million and well above any other immigrating group. Such high numbers often pulled U.S. immigration policy in the direction of specifically Mexican immigration policy because of its effects primarily on that population, the U.S. sharing 2,000 miles of border, their close economic and social ties, and the affects they have felt from previous U.S. immigration policies.⁶⁹

Mexican migrants are the largest population in the U.S. and the largest illegal immigrant group forcing any immigration policy toward a tendency to focus on Mexican immigration. No system currently exists to stem the flow while any existing U.S. immigration policy focuses on “family reunification” and skilled labor often omitting Mexican migrants who are of lower skill frequently leading to illegal migration. Recent numbers put about 6.7 million illegal workers from Mexico in the U.S. with no concrete policy to address the issue on either side.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Marc R. Rosenblum et al., “Mexican Migration to the United States Policy and Trends”, *Congressional Research Service* (June 7, 2012): Summary.

⁶⁹ John Bailey and Tonatiuh Guillén-López, “Making and Managing Policy,” in *Mexico & The United States: The Politics of Partnership*, ed. Peter H. Smith and Andrew Selee (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 71-72.

⁷⁰ David Fitzgerald and Rafael Alarcón, “Migration: Policies and Politics,” in *Mexico & The United States: The Politics of Partnership*, ed. Peter Smith and Andrew Selee (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 111.

The main time periods in immigration from Mexico that correlate with foreign policy decisions, or lack thereof, in the U.S. and Mexico therefore are prior to WWII and the Bracero Program, post Bracero Program cancelation up until the implementation of the IRCA, the 1980s, followed by the IRCA through 2000 and post 9/11 to the present. Each time period has resulted in reactions that have left both the U.S. and Mexico in stages of needing to react to a bad decision. By canceling the Bracero Program the U.S. set itself up for an already open avenue of migration through established networks put in place by forcefully closing a once open door. As a reaction the IRCA was implemented and once again created an open avenue for illegal and legal migration as the U.S. neglected to understand the consequences of its unilateral actions that in the end lacked true enforcement and simply created the beginning of a closed border reaction. Post IRCA created a small time period in which political changes in the U.S. and Mexico created an opportunity for a true bilateral policy that could have succeeded but once again in the end failed due in part to 9/11 and the changing dynamics brought about by the political and security shift seen immediately after.

Trans border Policy Reactions to Immigration

In keeping with this needed understanding of the history of Mexican immigration to the U.S. and its foreign policy effects it is important to understand the reactions toward Mexican immigration by each side during these time periods. These reaction have fueled much of the change in foreign

policy from both sides of the border within the last twenty years and have created a unique change in approach based on the external factors mentioned that in one instance were the direct result of U.S. domestic policy decisions. The U.S. up until the 1960s had a very open door reaction to migration from Mexico in the sense that it did not impose strict regulations limiting Mexican immigration. Instead, as previously discussed, times of worker shortages resulted in the creation of programs such as the Bracero Program to encourage worker flows across the border. By the 1980s reactions changed and the U.S. implemented the IRCA in 1986 creating the first policy toward curbing immigration flows north, but instead of succeeding the IRCA resulted in an influx of both legal and illegal migration.⁷¹ The resulting U.S. reaction to a growing number of migrants to the U.S. post Bracero Program was the creation of the IRCA that instead created one of the key periods in modern immigration policy that set the beginning for recent immigration policy. The once open border during the Bracero Program was suddenly closed and reinforced by the IRCA. What resulted was a large number of migrants already in the U.S. poised to create a network for those wishing to cross the border legally or illegally. From the Mexican side the notion of a “policy of no policy” was front and center during the implementation of the IRCA in the United States. Mexico decided to take a backseat to the policy, which affected Mexicans on both sides of the border and set forth the beginning of a “closed”

⁷¹ Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro, *Contemporary U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cooperation or Conflict in the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 153.

border system of immigration policy for Mexican migration. This is a prime example of Mexico's deep-rooted fears of U.S. intervention in Mexican policy and the notion of protecting Mexican sovereignty with the understanding that by not intervening Mexico was denying any rights the U.S. would have toward intervening in Mexican policies.⁷²

Mexican reaction and foreign policy perspectives during this time varied and showed an important aspect of needed improvement. Throughout the Bracero Program and up until the 1980s Mexico had as mentioned a "policy of not having a policy" in regards to acknowledging or assisting in "changes" to immigration policy and or discussions about the issue.⁷³ Into the 1970s and 80s Mexico removed penalties for illegal migration and as a result of economic decline did little to stop migration as labor demands became harder to fulfill. Emigration from Mexico became an "...economic escape valve at a national level that had the benefit of relieving pressure on the political system."⁷⁴ It wasn't until the 1990s that Mexican reaction to the issue began to change and a somewhat limited mutual cooperation reaction toward bilateral policy began to try and take shape. During the 1990s a continued perception of U.S. "hostility toward immigration", the creation of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the first success of democratization pushed foreign policy reactions in Mexico toward an

⁷² Fitzgerald and Alarcón, "Migration," 130.

⁷³ Dominguez, "Mexico's New Foreign Policy," 193.

⁷⁴ Fitzgerald and Alarcón, "Migration," 125.

understanding of the need for some bilateral agreement.⁷⁵ The emergence of NAFTA and the growing social, economic and political effect of a growing Mexican population in the U.S. had a big affect on guiding the need for changes in Mexico as each began to affect policy decisions within the country.⁷⁶ The 2000s ushered in a new era of need for cooperation that began with the forefront policy agenda of Vicente Fox and a push toward comprehensive bilateral immigration reform, which was abruptly halted by 9/11 and created a forever changing dynamic between U.S.-Mexican foreign policy.⁷⁷

During the 1990s external factors such as an economic recession in the U.S. created further enforcement of immigration and border enforcement through both domestic and foreign policy in the U.S.⁷⁸ By 2000 reaction from both sides created a need for “mutual understanding” and an attempt at bilateral cooperation in order to curb growing migration numbers.⁷⁹ Unfortunately 9/11 became a dramatic and important key period in which reaction toward immigration dramatically changed from a U.S. foreign policy perspective and continues to play a pivotal role in how the issue is viewed and addressed to this day.

⁷⁵ Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, *Cooperation or Conflict*, 153-154.

⁷⁶ Fitzgerald and Alarcón, “Migration,” 126.

⁷⁷ Bailey and Guillén-López, “Making and Managing Policy,” 71-72.

⁷⁸ Domínguez, “Mexico’s New Foreign Policy,” 193.

⁷⁹ Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, *Cooperation or Conflict*, 154.

Foreign Policy – 1987-2000 and 2000-Present

There are two very distinct foreign policy time periods between and within the U.S. and Mexico in regards to immigration that reflect the ever changing landscape of migrants already in the U.S. and the continual flow of migrants north across the border. These overlap with the crucial immigration time periods discussed before and are a direct result of historical decisions by the U.S. to curb immigration from Mexico. The first is from 1987 to 2000 in which the U.S. had a foreign policy of “democracy, drugs and development” toward Latin America, but held a unique view toward Mexico.⁸⁰ In terms of democratization the U.S. had ignored Mexico since the cold war as long as they maintained “political stability” and provided “reliable collaboration.”⁸¹ During this time NAFTA was enacted for bilateral development. It created the first bilateral policy since the Bracero Program to be created with the notion of mutual value and created the only successfully implemented instance of bilateral cooperation in which Mexico actively sought to benefit from the policies established within the act. The Bracero Program had been a bilateral agreement fueled by the need for labor as a reaction of war that soon became a necessity for Mexico to stem the economic demands of labor and provided the necessary labor needed in the U.S. at such an easy cost that

⁸⁰ Bailey and Guillén-López, “Making and Managing Policy,” 71.

⁸¹ Peter H. Smith, “Global Scenarios and Bilateral Priorities,” in *Mexico & The United States: The Politics of Partnership*, ed. Peter H. Smith and Andrew Selee (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 16.

after its disintegration it became much easier to look the other way at the growing number of illegal immigrants then to address the issue.⁸²

The 21st century (2000 to the present) brought about the second era in foreign policy between the two countries anchored by a democratic shift in Mexico with the election of Vicente Fox and a shift in focus on security and enhanced border control after 9/11 that allowed for an attempt at a focus on bilateral cooperation on mutually agreed upon agendas of security that both sides felt now needed to be addressed.⁸³ During this time Mexico began to see somewhat of a push toward democratization in respect to the federal system that included “presidentialism”, checks and balances and a reform of the federal system as a whole. The executive branch continues to play a major role while the power the presidency once had diminished and is now reliant on congressional approval.⁸⁴ One example of the effects and changes of democratization will be discussed further below when the Presidency of Vicente Fox is elaborated on as a turning point in both democratic elections and Mexican foreign policy.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a shift in Mexican foreign policy in which the country, that had maintained a policy of nonintervention, put an emphasis on pushing the U.S. into aligning with its “interests and ideals” for its own benefit.⁸⁵ One outcome already discussed was a policy on both sides that

⁸² Fitzgerald and Alarcón, “Migration,” 125.

⁸³ Bailey and Guillén-López, “Making and Managing Policy,” 73.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 67.

⁸⁵ Jorge Dominguez, “Mexico’s New Foreign Policy,” 182.

emphasized bilateral cooperation and resulted in NAFTA in 1994 under the Clinton and Zedillo administrations.⁸⁶ By 2000, under Vicente Fox, Mexico's foreign policy took on five important objectives that included "promoting democracy and human rights; defending citizens living abroad; multilateral forum participation; a foreign policy agenda balance; and promoting its economic, commercial and cultural interests."⁸⁷ Bilateral cooperation was set to take high precedence under Fox and President Bush as seen in Bush's decision to visit Mexico on his first international trip as president.⁸⁸ 9/11 dramatically changed any relations between Mexico and the U.S. from 2000-2006. Mexico's unwillingness to provide the U.S. with a show of support during this time created tension and animosity that lasted well beyond 9/11.⁸⁹ Vicente Fox had attempted to create a foreign policy that emphasized human rights, a significant shift from his predecessors, but ended in a presidency that was overshadowed by his country's close ties and dependence on the U.S.⁹⁰ One of Mexico's next presidents, Felipe Calderón, re-established cooperation between the U.S., under Presidents Bush, and the Obama administration, on issues such as immigration, trade, economic development and security especially border control and drug trafficking.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, *Contemporary Mexican Politics*, 298.

⁸⁷ George Grayson, *Mexico: Changing of the Guard* (New York: Foreign Policy Association. 2001), 56.

⁸⁸ Loretta Bondi, *Beyond the Border and Across the Atlantic: Mexico's Foreign and Security Policy post-September 11th* (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins. 2004), 69.

⁸⁹ Jorge Dominguez, "Mexico's New Foreign Policy," 193.

⁹⁰ Bondi, *Beyond the Border*, 25.

⁹¹ Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, *Contemporary Mexican Politics*, 299.

All of this shows that the last twenty years witnessed several aspects of change on both sides of the border that included changes in leadership, a number of key foreign policy agendas and initiatives during each time period and was a time period of crucial foreign policy implications for each side. More recently during the first part of the 21st century “four” key “factors” affected U.S.-Mexican relations and helped establish a pattern as to why the U.S. and Mexico have seen such resistance to a successful bilateral foreign policy. These included, as discussed, a change in the view of security through “terrorism” by the U.S., which also included Mexico. Next was a failure in established systems of bilateral security that included migration and counter drug issues. Third was an increase in the success of the economy that would have allowed for Mexico to survive a recession on its own, but in the same context the continued security/terrorism focus needed for an increase in immigration and drug trafficking to continue as bilateral agendas and support for change were not in place to curb systems already in place. Lastly was the notion that domestic policy did not affect foreign bilateral policy between the U.S. and Mexico during this time.⁹²

During the time periods of most change in terms of foreign policy the presidencies in the U.S. were of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama intertwined with policy initiatives such as NAFTA, and the Mérida Initiative and with important historical foreign policy time periods such as 9/11. Each played a crucial role in the understanding of why a successful

⁹² Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, *Cooperation or Conflict*, 17-18.

bilateral immigration policy is necessary for long-term success in stemming not only illegal immigration but creating a system that benefits both sides in the creation of a border that is both secure and successful for Mexico and the U.S.

Bill Clinton Administration – 1993-2001

To further understand these key time periods and foreign policy between the U.S. and Mexico within the last twenty years it is important to analyze the presidential roles and decisions made during that time. The presidency of Bill Clinton (1993-2001) saw two terms that each implemented important foreign policy changes between the U.S. and Mexico. In 1993 Congress passed the NAFTA agreement, previously discussed, opening up free trade between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada.⁹³ Congress during this time, mid-1990s, also passed several immigration laws that would be considered domestic policy and in turn should be considered U.S.-Mexican foreign policy. The back-and-forth between policy agendas was ever present as a bilateral economic agreement was created on one hand while immigration laws to keep migrants out were enacted on another. The continued connection between domestic and foreign policy in terms of immigration was ever present at this time as the U.S. chose to focus on the issue within the U.S. rather than addressing the issues between the U.S. and Mexico. The laws main principle was to prevent undocumented migration

⁹³ Michael Cox and Doug Stokes ed., *US Foreign Policy*. 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2012), 91-92.

into the U.S. as a “...result from widespread bipartisan panic...between urban crime, welfare abuse, terrorism, inner city drug addiction...and the growth of undocumented migration.”⁹⁴ The laws together amended several of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) laws. The Clinton administration also passed the “U.S. Southwest Strategic Doctrine of Border Control” in the mid-1990s that expanded deportation but did not yet create an increase in border enforcement.⁹⁵

In 1996 the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act was passed and allowed the attorney general authority to “fortify” the border with Mexico leading to the beginning of the wall that would eventually go up between the two countries in an attempt to keep migrants out.⁹⁶ Clinton created several programs “following IRCA provisions” for border control that included the Gatekeeper program in San Diego. Border patrol agents went from 5,900 in 1996 to 25,500 in 2010.⁹⁷ While detentions at the border increased during the initial phase of the Gatekeeper program data shown in table two below shows that the program cannot be considered a success on its own as numbers have declined over time and history has shown that numbers have been affected by outside factors such as economic decline in the U.S. and post 9/11 security enforcement changes. No bilateral discussion occurred over the implementation of the wall that would

⁹⁴ Mathew Coleman, “Immigration Geopolitics Beyond the Mexican-US Border,” *Antipode* (2001): 57.

⁹⁵ Coleman, “Immigration Geopolitics,” 57-58.

⁹⁶ Hook, *Paradox of World Power*, 395.

⁹⁷ Fitzgerald and Alarcón, “Migration,” 116-117.

eventually begin to go up as a result of border security and instead tensions began as Mexico considered the wall “shameful”.⁹⁸ The remainder of Clinton’s first term was focused on post cold war Russia, Yugoslavia and other international agendas.⁹⁹

Table 2 - Apprehensions per Year at Mexican Border³²

1970	1986 (IRCA)	1993/1994	2000	2009	2010
200,000	1.6 million	1 million	1.6 million	541,000	463,000

George W. Bush Administration – 2001-2009

The presidency of George W. Bush (2001-2009) began with tensions high over immigration enforcement and saw a much more complex situation when it came to creating a bilateral immigration policy with Mexico. The events of 9/11 quickly created a situation in which immigration and border enforcement became linked to terrorism prevention for the remainder of the century, and as discussed several times has become a debated issue of security.¹⁰⁰ In the realm of foreign policy with Mexico just prior to 9/11 the presidencies of George W. Bush and Vicente Fox from Mexico had proposed a joint declaration called “Towards a Partnership for Prosperity: The Guanajuato Proposal (February 16, 2001).” The proposal was intended for collaboration on “border control, drug traffic, energy resources and

⁹⁸ Hook, *Paradox of World Power*, 396.

⁹⁹ Jorge Dominguez, “Mexico’s New Foreign Policy,” 184.

¹⁰⁰ Coleman, “Immigration Geopolitics,” 54.

migration.”¹⁰¹ Through this declaration the two presidencies agreed to a bilateral agreement of “shared responsibility” for “safe and legal” migration on both sides of the border and agreed to address the “causes” of migration that could then “...foster economic growth in Mexico” and in return reduce migration.¹⁰² A joint effort toward a bilateral “priority” on immigration had not been at the “forefront” of policy on either side since the 1960s.¹⁰³ Unfortunately 9/11 helped in ending the possibility of shared responsibility as the terrorist attacks forever altered U.S. foreign policy priorities. The new agenda put migration through a “security lens” that refocused immigration policy with Mexico into a border security framework and for the time being, under Bush, eliminated a bilateral approach. Another major turning point in the failure of the first real attempt at a bilateral policy agenda was the insistence of Mexico that all provisions of the policy be a “take it or leave it” mandate in which four out of the five provisions required action by the U.S. alone. These included, “taking in Mexican workers, regularizing the status of undocumented migrants already in the U.S., allowing family reunification for these new migrants, and investing U.S. money into the regions in Mexico most responsible for fleeing migration.”¹⁰⁴ This very one-sided policy forced the U.S. into addressing the issue largely on its own making it that much more unlikely it would pass congressional approval.

¹⁰¹ Alexandra Delano, “From ‘Shared Responsibility’ to a Migration Agreement? The Limits for Cooperation in the Mexico-United States Case (2000-2008)”, *International Migration* 50 (S1) (2009): 41.

¹⁰² Delano, “Shared Responsibility,” 42.

¹⁰³ Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, *Cooperation or Conflict*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

In March 2002 the two countries continued on a 22-point plan called “Mexico-U.S. Border Partnership Action Plan” for agreements on infrastructure and the secure migration of people and goods for security reasons. Immigration discussions were never discussed again in terms of a foreign policy agenda during the Bush administration.¹⁰⁵ 9/11 is often considered the sole factor in the Bush administrations change from a bilateral immigration approach to a unilateral security approach, but his administration is a prime example of bureaucratic push and pull factors that play a background effect on foreign policy decisions. Prior to 9/11 Bush had received strong push back from his own party for a unilateral approach with Mexico. 9/11 gave him one excuse to pull out of his “shared responsibility” agreement and continue with the U.S.’ tradition of a one-sided immigration policy.¹⁰⁶ The push by Mexico for an “all or nothing” approach that put the implementation and success of the policy squarely on the U.S. gave him the other. Though unsuccessful through the initial foreign bilateral policy Bush attempted a domestic policy agenda. His agenda had been to try to implement a successful immigration policy and as discussed before much of U.S. immigration policy has eventually become a domestic policy agenda when focused on Latin America and especially Mexico. In 2004 Bush attempted to pass through Congress a policy that would eventually take three years to create and would become the Comprehensive Immigration

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 153.

¹⁰⁶ Delano, “Shared Responsibility,” 45.

Reform Act of 2007. Had it passed it would have provided several changes including increased border security and a “path to citizenship” for immigrants already in the U.S.¹⁰⁷ The policy did not pass and faced strong opposition. Ultimately both Bush and Fox failed.

Later in his administration Bush would implement a policy with Mexico that would continue during the next White House administration and would show a shift in foreign policy direction from the U.S. and an initiative from Mexico. During Bush’s administration Mexico saw the end of Fox’s and the beginning of Felipe Calderón’s presidencies. The Mérida Initiative was implemented in 2007 with then President Calderón from Mexico and George W. Bush from the U.S. The initiative was a direct response to Calderón’s foreign policy agenda that included tackling drug trafficking and the increase in organized crime that was beginning to increase in prevalence in Mexico. During this time the U.S. saw a need for mutual cooperation in response to the ever-growing need for border and security enforcement. However, initial reactions were cautious, as previous “bilateral” policy discussion from the 1980s and 90s had stopped due to U.S. suspicions with Mexico over cartel corruption and Mexico’s concerns over maintaining sovereignty.¹⁰⁸ Eventually the two agreed and 1.5 billion was approved for the program from

¹⁰⁷ Fitzgerald and Alarcón, “Migration,” 131.

¹⁰⁸ Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea. "U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative And Beyond." Congressional Research Service: Report. *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center* (2013): 7-8

2008 to 2010.¹⁰⁹ The initiative became an assistance program that was to provide 1.5 million to 1. “break the power of criminal organizations”, 2. “strengthen border, air and maritime controls”, 3. “improve the capacity of justice systems in the region” and 4. “curtail gang activity and diminish drug demand.”¹¹⁰ The initiative played an important role in creating a response on both sides of the border and is a prime example of the changing dynamics within the focus of the U.S. foreign policy agenda which during that time was not focused on immigration. The focus became counter terrorism on the U.S. side and narcotics and weapons on the Mexican side. This initiative would carry over into the next administration linking policy agendas and security focuses.

Barack Obama Administration – 2009 to Present

The most recent Barack Obama White House has had to contend with the policy decisions left behind by the administrations before him and continue to follow through with the changed U.S. security landscape. As mentioned before the two decades that preceded Obama were filled with U.S. domestic policies that often dominated U.S.-Latin American “agendas.”¹¹¹ Obama has also had to approach foreign policy in the region through new lenses as many Latin American countries felt the Bush administration had created a “hostile climate for immigrants to the United

¹⁰⁹ Seelke and Finklea, “Security Corporation,” 7-8.

¹¹⁰ Clare Seelke & Kristin Finklea. “Development and Implementation of the Merida Initiative”. Congressional Research Service (June 6, 2013): 8.

¹¹¹ Sweig, “Getting Latin America Right,” 23.

States” and had created an environment of “mistrust”.¹¹² At the 2009 Summit of the Americas Obama’s foreign policy agenda for the region included “...citizen security, counter narcotics, microfinance, and energy.”¹¹³ His agenda did not discuss immigration and only addressed the notion of mutual responsibility in the realm of narcotics as he acknowledged that the demand for drugs in the U.S. is a proponent for drug violence in Latin America and especially Mexico.¹¹⁴ Mexico’s previous president, Felipe Calderón, eventually left office during Obama’s administration frustrated with the notion that “shared responsibility” was neglected in regards to the growing gun violence in Mexico.¹¹⁵

The Obama administration up until 2013 has not focused on immigration policy changes or reform, but the elections of 2012 made it clear that the issue was once again of bureaucratic interest as an ever growing Mexican population in the U.S. made sure their demands for reform were heard as the democratic party took steps to appease one of their biggest voting contingencies. The current policy reform was once again a domestic agenda outlined previously in this thesis and lacked any bilateral cooperation necessary for success. It also emphasized the continued theme of border security without bilateral cooperation, which is needed for true success. There cannot be a decline in attempted crossings if the U.S. continues to

¹¹² Ibid., 24.

¹¹³ Fitzgerald and Alarcón, “Migration,” 125.

¹¹⁴ Sweig, “Getting Latin America Right,” 24-25.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 33.

attempt to hold back those that will continue to come while not holding Mexico accountable for prevention as well. Steps have been taken on the domestic policy side in Mexico to begin addressing this issue, but until they become a bilateral agreement it will be difficult to see any real change. In 2011 Mexico enacted their first change since 1974 by passing a Migration Law that “regulates” entry and exits of both citizens and foreigners in and out of Mexico.¹¹⁶ The law is a first step but still does not address the underlying issue of illegal immigration out of Mexico.

The most recent presidential elections in Mexico will likely shift the focus of Mexico’s foreign policy. Enrique Peña Nieto won the election on July 2, 2012 for the PRI. The PRI has not been in power for 12 years after ruling for much of the last century under clouds of corruption and economic disaster. Peña Nieto’s foreign policy is not yet fully implemented, but it’s speculated that he will focus his foreign policy on economics.¹¹⁷ Other priorities include “...reducing violence, combating poverty, reforming education and fostering social responsibility.”¹¹⁸ By focusing on economics, Mexico’s new president will be sidestepping two of the biggest issues affecting and dictating American policy in recent years, immigration and drug violence/cartel violence. How this will affect U.S.-Mexican relations is yet to be seen, but if

¹¹⁶ Fitzgerald and Alarcón, “Migration,” 129.

¹¹⁷ Andres Oppenheimer. “Mexico will not return to 3rd world foreign policy,” *Miami Herald*, July 4, 2012.

¹¹⁸ Seelke, Clare. “Mexico’s New Administration: Priorities and Key Issues in U.S.-Mexican Relations.” Congressional Research Service (January 16, 2013): 6.

Mexico's foreign policy does not align or at least attempt to align with U.S. policy it will again lead to tension and a lack of effective changes across either border. U.S. sentiment right now is for changes to happen on the U.S. side on each issue, but it's understood from this history that bilateral support is needed. With the PRI's re-establishment in the 21st century it will be a waiting game, unless the U.S. pushes for policy change, to see in which direction Mexico takes its foreign policy with not only the U.S. but its newly created relations within Latin America and the Pacific. Many don't see it varying much from Calderón's foreign policy with the slight exception that Peña Nieto has publicly stated his views on cartel violence that do not align with those of the U.S.¹¹⁹ Mutual cooperation is now of utmost importance.

Border security, drug trafficking and immigration are at the forefront in foreign policy. Post 9/11 the shift in the defense department was toward terrorism and a big concern was put on the use of the Mexican border as a means of entry into the U.S. With the increase in border violence the use of U.S. military force has been discussed, but with a new president comes new policy changes. Many believe Peña Nieto's PRI politics will mean no cartel intervention, which would then put the defense department and the U.S. in an unusual situation.¹²⁰

The U.S. and Mexico are closely intertwined economically. "Mexico is the second destination for U.S. exports, the third largest trading

¹¹⁹ Cory Siskind, "Mexico's Peña Nieto to Benefit From Calderón's Foreign Policy Legacy," *World Politics Review* (July 5, 2012) <http://www.latintelligence.com/2012/06/20/u-s-and-mexico-ties-that-bind/>

¹²⁰ James Poulos, "Gateway Interventions," *Foreign Policy* (November 10, 2011)

partner...and third largest supplier of oil.”¹²¹ Mexico also has a manufacturing and service-based economy that is reliant on the U.S. market which has close to \$500 billion in annual trade.¹²² If Enrique Peña Nieto’s presidency will focus on the economy it will be beneficial to both sides of the border. Both countries depend economically on one another and “...when the Mexican economy does well, it means greater prosperity for the U.S.”¹²³ Mexico’s emphasis on making the economy part of its foreign policy is crucial to success that can then effect immigration and in turn foreign policy agendas. A stronger economy as attempted by agendas like NAFTA mean less push factors in Mexico for migration. It’s crucial that Mexico take those steps to strengthen weaknesses that have often “pushed” migrants north.

Conclusion

In order to create a lasting, successful, immigration policy between the U.S. and Mexico an understanding of the immigration history, foreign policy structure and key periods of policy on both sides of the border need to be known and understood. Both the U.S. and Mexico have had key periods in the last twenty years to implement not only domestic policies that should have become bilateral foreign policies, but successful overall policies as well. The first missed opportunity for a continued successful policy was the cancelation of the Bracero Program. By canceling the program the U.S. and Mexico opened the window for an increase in illegal immigration that would set the

¹²¹ Daniel Aguilar, “U.S. and Mexico: Ties that Bind,” *LatIntelligence* (June 20, 2012)

¹²² Seelke, “Mexico’s New Administration,” 9.

¹²³ Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, *Contemporary Mexican Politics*, 326.

foreground for future immigration struggles. By setting a precedence of a “policy of no policy” both sides of the border created an established flow of immigration that would become much more difficult to stop in the future. The next missed opportunity was the implementation of the IRCA. The U.S. and Mexico both missed the opportunity to act and implement a successful bilateral policy. The U.S. outcome was the beginning of border security and the unintended implementation of a strong migratory network for illegal and legal immigration from Mexico once it granted amnesty to nearly 3 million Mexicans already in the U.S. On the Mexican side a lack of participation left Mexico unable to give an opinion on the outcome of the law, including the border, and created a missed opportunity for bilateral cooperation. The third and most crucial was during the Bush and Fox administrations in 2001. This became the first real attempt at a bilateral foreign policy agenda between two very eager administrations that for varying reasons, including those beyond their control, did not succeed. External political and social factors contributed to the failure of both a foreign and domestic policy that would address the ever-growing immigration issue in the U.S. during the Bush administration, which included the events of 9/11. These events would then become the fourth limiting factor in recent success toward bilateral immigration policy between the U.S. and Mexico as the U.S. turned its focus on security and terrorism and dropped immigration from the forefront of its foreign policy agenda. The

border instead became a security risk rather than an avenue of improvement and policy became domestic rather than foreign.

Each White House administration within the last twenty years has had a different approach and agenda in terms of immigration and foreign policy. Key foreign policy time periods during the history of immigration from Mexico have shown missed opportunities for bilateral policy success. By better understanding Mexico's policy and process the U.S. puts itself in a better position for cooperation and mutual understanding. To transcend obstacles "U.S.-Mexico collaboration is absolutely essential if the two countries are to get a handle on trans border crime, security challenges such as arms trafficking, narcotics, and human smuggling...official corruption and tension over the goals and means for law enforcement."¹²⁴ Current changes in the administrations in Mexico represent the biggest hurdle now faced by the United States. American perceptions on the issues of border protection and immigration also pose big issues during upcoming election years. Overcoming each is reliant on the understanding that the U.S. and Mexico have a mutually dependent and complex relationship. Creating a concrete bilateral policy on key issues such as border security, narcotics, immigration or the economy are key in preventing current and future Mexican and U.S. foreign policy tensions and restraints. Focusing on certain aspects during each presidency is important, but without a backbone policy for further discussions

¹²⁴ Ibid., 311.

neither country will see significant improvements in those key aspects that can then lead to a successful foreign policy.

Mexico's backseat approach to immigration must change dramatically and most importantly through its foreign policy approach. Any attempts at a successful bilateral policy cannot take place without Mexico playing an equal role in policy setting and implementation instead of the current asymmetrical approach seen in policy implementation that affects Mexico but is implemented only in the U.S. It is not enough to have one side strong-arm the other, as has often been the case with the U.S. over Mexico in order to have a mutual, successful, policy reform. It is also not enough to have the U.S. set policy agendas based on a political system that puts congressional, and state and local government agendas ahead of those that benefit bilateral cooperation. The biggest change needed either within this current administration or in the future is a view in which Mexico is of equal worth, strength and responsibility in the immigration policy debate. While the U.S. can continue to aim at closing its border it will be unsuccessful if Mexico continues to ignore the issue or address the underlying causes of "why" Mexican's are immigrating to the U.S. Without this joint effort success will not be met anytime soon.

The political landscape within the U.S. in which policy agendas continue to be dictated by a system of mistrust, public opinion, congressional agendas, and an interplay of agency agendas will not lead to a change in

foreign policy toward immigration. As long as the U.S. sets the agenda and Mexico continues to both step back and struggle to get effective policies in place across the border the dynamics of foreign policy between both countries will not change nor will the unilateral approach to immigration policy.

Chapter 3
Mexican Poverty & Immigration
Healthcare and Education Reform are Fundamental for Lasting Change

Since the later part of the 20th century immigration has been an ever-present issue between the United States and Mexico and a constant in U.S.-Mexican relations. Understanding why Mexicans migrate north is at the root of creating sustainable change on both sides of the border. Much of the literature surrounding the issue has focused on a flawed U.S. immigration policy or border security and has failed to address the issue from within its southern source. Mexico itself has often distanced itself, as previously discussed, from making a strong effort at implementing in country changes that they feel will impinge on U.S. policy or alienate the millions of Mexicans living in the U.S. The continued problem of immigration, primarily illegal, does however need to be addressed with a particular emphasis on the resulting migration due to poverty. Approaching the issue from the Mexican side creates a unique opportunity to understand not only what factors drive the journey millions take north, but how the country has or can make improvements to reduce the specific numbers who do so as a result of poverty factors while political policy is being discussed in the U.S.

Mexico has three areas of important in country changes that can or are having an effect on one of the leading causes of Mexican immigration, poverty. Poverty is a leading force in the desire to seek a better life in the U.S. for many immigrants from Mexico who flee economic and social

hardships by making the often treacherous journey north out of desperation for a better life. While this is not the only factor in the push pull of migration it is a leading force in the search for economic and social improvement by the largest part of Mexico's migrating population from areas of consistent poverty that have created a dependence on social networking and remittances for survival. This chapter will address the issues of healthcare, education, inequality and underlying poverty in an attempt to understand how addressing one and or all does have an inherent effect on immigration as a whole.

When taking a look at Mexico changes need to be made and continue in the important areas of healthcare, education and access to social programs that in turn address poverty in order to have an impact on future migration out of the country. Healthcare reform, education reform and social programs such as *Oportunidades* have been the stepping stone toward addressing the poverty that continues to plague certain areas of Mexico that have historically shown an increase in migration numbers to the U.S., and by understanding their effect on poverty and how to address it from the inside out Mexico can make strides toward its own understanding of how to approach immigration from a different vantage point.

Mexican Poverty

Poverty has been an issue that has continued to plague Mexico's attempt at economic and social progress. Though recent years have seen an

increase in Mexico's middle class and a decline in extreme poverty, overall poverty has stayed relatively constant. Extreme poverty fell from 2000 to 2006 most significantly in rural Mexico where levels went from 42.2% to 24.5%.¹²⁵ Migration to the United States has been at all time lows since 2010 and has been attributed to a decline in poverty throughout Mexico among economic and social changes that have helped improve conditions to a degree that has seemed to make inward migration more opportunistic than outward migration.¹²⁶ A closer look at poverty within Mexico however shows a sharp contrast between those with lower poverty rates and those with a higher incidence and history of outward migration and a connection to the importance of understanding both the economic and social push and pull effects of immigration previously discussed in chapter one. States with higher poverty rates within Mexico have historically been affected by outward migration, mainly to the U.S., in higher rates than other areas of Mexico. Understanding why is important in considering how programs that improve poverty through healthcare, education and social assistance (such as *Oportunidades*) will make a lasting impact on future migration numbers.

Northern and central states within Mexico have less than 36% poverty and little extreme poverty while southern states on the other hand such as Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca have rates as high as two-thirds to three-

¹²⁵ Agustín Escobar Latapí, "Can Migration Foster Development in Mexico? The Case of Poverty and Inequality." *The Author: Journal Compilation* 47 (5) (2009): 100.

¹²⁶ Selee, "A Changing Mexico," 115, 120.

quarters in poverty and one third to one half in extreme poverty.¹²⁷ In Oaxaca extreme poverty is at 75% of its total 3.4 million citizens. The state also has an illiteracy rate of 21.5% versus the national 9.4% rate and 45.5% of Oaxaca's students never complete an elementary school education. In Chiapas schooling is at an even lower rate at 6.9 years per person.¹²⁸ A conclusion discussed by David Bacon in *Cursed by Gold or Blessed by Corn* effectively sums up four reasons why migration out of Mexico has been so high in these areas; "1. High levels of poverty and marginalization, 2. Decline in rural economy affecting more than half the economically active population, 3. Lack of well-paying jobs made worse by lack of skills and illiteracy, and 4. Family and social networks that link community residents with migrants who have already left."¹²⁹ Social networks have been a big push and pull factor, largely discussed in chapter one, for immigration to the U.S. and in areas such as Oaxaca this is widely seen when about 500,000 Oaxacans currently live in the U.S. and come from communities that have become so dependent on immigration that survival for those left behind has become dependent on those that travel north. They in turn send remittances that often are the difference between an education and or basic necessities for those still in Mexico.¹³⁰ The outward migration is so ingrained due to a lack of economic and social mobility that despite an increase in birth rates from 2000

¹²⁷ Selee, "A Changing Mexico," 120.

¹²⁸ David Bacon, *The Right to Stay Home: How US Policy Drives Mexican Migration* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013), 56.

¹²⁹ Bacon, *Right to Stay Home*, 57.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 56

to 2005 the total Oaxacan population only grew by 0.39% while 18% of the total population had migrated to other states within Mexico or immigrated to the U.S.¹³¹ Improvements must start in areas such as Oaxaca if overall immigration is to be addressed from within Mexico. A continual contrast between rural areas such as Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero with the rest of Mexico will only continue to create a normalcy around immigration to the U.S., legal and illegal, that is centered on social networks that will continue to grow, and pull, Mexicans north in search of what they can't find for themselves or their families at home. Improvements in economic and social areas addressing poverty must start in rural communities such as Oaxaca if immigration is to be fully addressed in a positive and long lasting way from within Mexico. Those improvements Mexico is beginning to make will be discussed further below.

Inequality

Other issues to be addressed within Mexico that effect poverty and immigration are the up and down persistence of inequality, which is highly affected by healthcare access, education and country wide economic success or lack thereof. In order to understand the effect changes in these areas can make it's important to first understand from where improvements need to be made. Latin America has a high level of inequality with a Gini coefficient of 0.53 through the mid-2000s making it "...18% more unequal than Sub-Saharan Africa, 36% more unequal than East Asia and 65% more unequal

¹³¹ Ibid, 57

than the high-income countries.”¹³² Gini coefficients are used to measure inequality within countries with values between zero and one with those closer to zero reflecting less inequality.¹³³ Mexican specific inequality has seen ups and downs from the late 1980s until about 2010. Inequality rose from 1989 to 1994 and declined from 1994 to 2010. From 2000 onward government wide cash transfers played a big role in the decline of inequality and will be discussed further below through the *Oportunidades* program.¹³⁴

From 1994 to 2006 the overall Gini coefficient for Mexico fell from 0.571 to 0.512 and stayed stable from 2006 to 2010.¹³⁵ NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) established in 1994 and discussed in detail in chapters one and two overlapped with the beginning of the fall of Mexico’s Gini coefficient together with *Progresas/Oportunidades* (Progress/Opportunities) established in 1997. During this time Mexico also suffered its peso crisis in December 1994 after which per capita GDP fell to 8%. By 1996 to 2000 GDP rebounded to 4% but then slowed to only a 1% increase per year between 2000 and 2006 during which time income inequality declined but overall inequality stabilized.¹³⁶ Education reform, discussed further below, has also shown a change in Gini coefficient for Mexico with a measurement in terms of years of schooling between ages 25 to

¹³² Luis F. López-Calva and Nora Lustig editors, *Declining Inequality in Latin America: A Decade of Progress?* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 1.

¹³³ López-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 1.

¹³⁴ Raymundo Campos, Gerardo Esquivel and Nora Lustig, “The Rise and Fall of Income Inequality in Mexico, 1989-2010,” *ECINEQ: Society for the Study of Economic Inequality* (September 2012): Abstract.

¹³⁵ Campos, Esquivel and Lustig, “Rise and Fall,” Introduction.

¹³⁶ López-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 76.

65 seeing a decline from 0.444 in 1989 to 0.324 in 2008.¹³⁷ During this time per capita GDP was below national standards despite the attempts toward decreasing inequality and improving economic stability through “efficiency”, employment growth was slow, and there was a “large expansion of health, housing, day care, and pension programs for households lacking social security coverage.”¹³⁸

With this all in mind it is important to note the improvements Mexico has made during this time with “sustained growth” and “gradually improving standards of living” with Mexicans earning about the same as those in Russia or Brazil, twice as much as those in China and six times those in India.¹³⁹ To note however is the persistent fact that at least half of the population falls into the category of poor with rural areas seeing the brunt of extreme poverty.¹⁴⁰

Social Programs and Poverty - *Oportunidades*

Mexico has one of the highest Gini coefficients, inequality, in Latin America. A study done in 2004 showed that “educational inequality accounts for the largest share of Mexico’s earnings inequality” and that “enrichment” programs could help reduce inequality.¹⁴¹ Cash transfer programs (CCT) have become a primary means of focusing on poverty within Latin America and in

¹³⁷ Campos, Esquivel and Lustig, “Rise and Fall,” 7.

¹³⁸ Santiago Levy. *Good Intentions Bad Outcomes: Social Policy, Informality, and Economic Growth in Mexico* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2008), 1.

¹³⁹ Selee, “A Changing Mexico,” 116.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Douglas McKee and Petra E. Todd, “The Longer-Term Effects of Human Capital,” *Estudios de Economía*. 38 (1) (2011): 69.

turn Mexico. The programs provide cash grants to poor families that make sure their children go to school and subsidies for regular health clinic visits.¹⁴² Mexico's *Oportunidades* program, formally called *Progresa*, began in 1997 as a program aimed at education, nutrition and health. The education portion grants cash transfers based on school attendance, necessity for supplies and successful high school graduation. The nutrition and health portion provide cash transfers and "in-kind transfers" in the form of nutritional supplements, vaccinations and preventative treatment based on consistent visits to a health center. The average cash transfer per month is about US\$35 and equals about 25% of a rural household's monthly income for those participating in the program.¹⁴³ In 2000 the program covered about 2.5 million rural families through about \$1 billion in benefits and the percentage of students reaching high school increased by 20%.¹⁴⁴ By 2005 the program covered 5 million Mexican families with an annual budget of US\$2.1 billion equal to 0.36% of GDP versus 0.02% at its inception in 1997.¹⁴⁵ *Oportunidades* directly reduced the country's Gini coefficient in connection with income distribution from 0.502 to 0.494, which is almost one-fifth of the overall decline in Mexico's coefficient from 1996 to 2006.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² McKee and Todd, "Human Capital," 68.

¹⁴³ López-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 196.

¹⁴⁴ Bill Ong Hing, *Ethical Borders: NAFTA, Globalization, and Mexican Migration* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010), 139.

¹⁴⁵ McKee and Todd, "Human Capital," 68.

López-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 196

¹⁴⁶ López-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 197

Studies have found that “...communities with higher international emigration rates tend to show shorter school careers than communities with less U.S. migration...” and understanding these trends will benefit future attempts at implementing mutually beneficial migration programs that eliminate flows based on poverty so often seen now.¹⁴⁷ Programs such as *Oportunidades* have had “significant” impacts on both education and health in terms of local improvements and a reduction of poverty that can not only impact immigration but change the focus from within Mexico for a better overall understanding of the push and pull effects that have helped to dictate immigration north.

Oportunidades has shown significant improvements in post-primary enrollment by increasing at an average of 24% from before the program to just after its inception in 2002-2003. Secondary education in rural communities rose by 11% for girls and 7.5% for boys by 1999. Health services rose to 67% for beneficiaries while in turn infant mortality fell by 11% higher among participants in non-rural areas as did maternal mortality while rural areas saw a 2% overall drop in infant mortality for those in the program versus those not participating.¹⁴⁸ By 2004 the affects on the reduction in poverty were seen as poverty rates among participants dropped by 9.7% in rural areas and 2.6% in urban areas.¹⁴⁹ The biggest affects were seen and are still seen in rural areas were from 2000 to 2006 extreme poverty fell

¹⁴⁷ Latapí, “Poverty and Inequality,” 100-101.

¹⁴⁸ Lopez-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 196.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 197

dramatically as more than 70% of rural families participated in the program and extreme poverty levels fell from 42.4% to 24.5%. In markedly smaller areas the drop was even more dramatic from 52.9% to 27.3% in communities that had 2,500 or fewer inhabitants as a whole and with extremely high enrollments in the *Oportunidades* program.¹⁵⁰

Data from the International Food Policy Research Institute, the Mexican National Institute of Health and CIESAS will show a reduction in poverty among participants, an increase in education and better health. For these reasons alone the program has been shown to be significant in not only reducing poverty but affecting migration, which fell by 58% among participants, due to the reduction in poverty triggers like catastrophic events. The program has also been highly successful in providing education to the younger generation of residents from communities that tend to have a higher migration propensity.¹⁵¹ A higher education leads to greater opportunity at home, but the proper infrastructure must be in place to allow for that opportunity.

Education Reform

Mexico has made strides in providing that education to its citizens beginning with the *Oportunidades* program and most recently with education reform, but still has a long way to go when schools still lack basics like water or electricity. The PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) controlled

¹⁵⁰ Latapí, "Poverty and Inequality," 100.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 98-99.

government in 2013 put forth a proposal to tie teacher jobs with standardized testing and remove unions in the hiring process. Opposition has resulted as well as strong support from a corporate elite known to influence Mexican education and who helped create Mexicanos Primero. Mexicanos Primero was created in 2005 as a corporate education reform lobby that pushed for standardized tests and merit pay for teachers based on those results. Very similar to the reforms pushed for in the U.S. The Alliance for Quality Education (ACE) resulted and helped create a middle ground, after a strong teacher protest, between the push for reform from the corporate elite and unionized teachers. By 2009 a national standardized test called ENLACE was created during the same year that PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) was administered in Mexico to poor results in which 50% of 15-year-olds scored a level 2 or below on a scale of 0 to 5 in math or science.¹⁵² The 2013 legislation pushed for constitutional reform that would not only tie standardized testing to teachers but also create standards for the hiring and promotion of teachers.¹⁵³

The education system in Mexico has about 74% of teachers with a post-graduate education of which 22% are PhDs and yet as many as 50% of students do not make it out of primary school. The quality of the education seems to be the contrasting factor that continues to effect true reform, and yet by international standards Mexico is poised to meet its United Nations

¹⁵² David Bacon, "US-Style School Reform Goes South," *The Nation* 296 (13) (2013): 21-22.

¹⁵³ Selee, "A Changing Mexico," 121.

Millennium Development Goals for education by 2015 of which the focus is to provide a quality basic education to every child.¹⁵⁴ The quality of that education is of true contention in areas like Oaxaca and the south where poverty is a strong determining factor in the decision and or ability to attend school. The resources provided in these areas are not comparable to those in Northern Mexico and teachers deal with little to no supplies and dilapidating structures along with socioeconomic conditions.¹⁵⁵ Mexico invested US\$60 billion, 7.5% of GDP, in both private and public education in 2006 to help combat those issues and meet those Millennium goals, but instead national improvements that should go beyond a basic education have resulted in 28 out of 100 students who do not finish primary school, 17 out of 100 who are at least one year behind and 12 out of 100 who are two or more years behind.¹⁵⁶

Oportunidades has been the leading reform system in place to combat education pitfalls in Mexico since 1997 but the focus seems to be more on enrollment versus true overall education reform that can create overarching effects in terms of poverty and inequality. Through the program about 5.1 million children in primary and secondary education have been able to remain in school and enrollment rates in middle and high school increased by 35% and 85% in the crucial rural areas of Mexico since 2000.¹⁵⁷ True education reform needs to start with an understanding of the areas most in

¹⁵⁴ Fernando Romero/Lar, *Hyper-Border: The Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Border and its Future* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 191.

¹⁵⁵ Bacon, "School Reform," 21-22.

¹⁵⁶ Romero/Lar, *Hyper-Border*, 191.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

need and how to provide not only an education, but a true quality education that can withstand the ups and downs in Mexico's attempts at upward mobility while making the choices at home easier and more appealing than those over the border in the United States. The effect a lack of education has on continual poverty is a catalyst that easily pushes immigration from Mexico.

Healthcare Reform

A lack of healthcare and health service access can also be viewed as a determining factor in immigration when the result of not having either is weighed with economic inequality and poverty. Mexico has made strides in providing healthcare coverage for its entire population as a means of combating the effects it has on poverty and as a result is making a strong stand at attacking the overarching effects of poverty within its communities. The Millennium Development goals approved by the United Nations in 2000 through the Millennium Declaration were a catalyst to not only education reform but healthcare reform throughout Mexico. The declaration established seven goals that focused on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, improving health outcomes and ensuring environmental sustainability. The goals establish that extreme poverty is to be reduced by half, universal primary education should be provided to both boys and girls, both should complete at least primary schooling and there should be a reduction in both child and

maternal mortality by two thirds and three quarters respectively by 2015.¹⁵⁸

Mexico has meet its education goals and is on its way to meeting its healthcare goals through its most recent successful healthcare overhaul and creation of a universal healthcare program called Seguro Popular.

Having a sustainable system to address a nations health is an important part in maintaining a sound and thriving society. Mexico is a prime example of a current country that has focused its attention on addressing its national health as a direct result of its health disparity results and ever increasing understanding that without addressing this need the country as a whole will soon begin to suffer. To understand the health improvements Mexico has made it is important to look at the statistics for several of the health disparity categories taken from the World Health Organization's annual statistics report as well as the World Development Indicator reports. From 1990 to 2009 life expectancy went from 71 years to 76, the infant mortality rate went from 36 to 15 per 1,000 births, the measles immunization rate went from 75 to 95 percent for 12-23 month olds and the total percentage of GDP expenditure on health went from 5.1 to 5.9. By 2009 the survival rate for men and women was at 79 and 87 respectively.¹⁵⁹ Steady improvement in each of these areas has shown an increasing focus by Mexico

¹⁵⁸ Ruwan Jayasuriya and Quentin Wodon, *Efficiency in Reaching the Millennium Development Goals: World Bank Paper No. 9* (Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2003), 63.

¹⁵⁹ 2011 World Development Indicators. Washington DC, 2001.
2011 World Health Organization (WHO) Statistics.
<http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/2011/en/index.html>

in improving its healthcare as it shifted their understanding of its effects toward increasing poverty. As we have already seen poverty is one of many driving forces in the decision to migrate and improvements in areas such as healthcare and education will not only improve Mexican society at home, but will make a lasting influence on the decision of future generations to make the often dangerous illegal journey to the United States.

When discussing and reviewing healthcare, health disparities statistics or information pertaining to any one country it is important to first understand how the international community defines “health coverage” and “health disparities”. Health coverage is defined by the World Health Organization as, “...indicators that reflect the extent to which people in need actually receive important health interventions...”¹⁶⁰ Health disparities are defined as, “...comparative measurements of the burden of disease, and morbidity and mortality rates, in specific populations...that persist over time.”¹⁶¹ They are also defined and categorized in different categories over different databases and analysis, but a basic list of disparity indicators are; disease, mortality rate, infant mortality rate, morbidity rate, life expectancy, birth rate, fertility rate, disability, and nutritional status.¹⁶² Often immunization and health expenditure are also considered. All of these

¹⁶⁰ 2011 WHO Statistics, 91.

¹⁶¹ Carol Holtz, *Global Health Care: Issues and Policies, Second Edition* (Massachusetts: Jones & Barlett Learning, LLC, 2013) 10.

¹⁶² Holtz, *Global Health Care*, 11.

indicators have a strong correlation with not only a country's overall development, but also how poverty indicators are addressed and improved.

Before looking at the importance of the challenge Mexico took in implementing healthcare reform through universal health care it is important to understand some of the history behind why and under what circumstances. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights established the right to health care for all under international law and was universally accepted by the United Nations (UN) as a “common standard for the entire world’s population”.¹⁶³ The law established every person’s right to a “standard of living” that includes medical care. With this focus in mind in 2012 Mexico did what most developed countries have not been able to do, they finished enrolling over 50 million uninsured Mexicans into their universal healthcare program. Mexico now provides coverage for more than 90% of its 109.6 million citizens.¹⁶⁴ As far back as 1990 Mexico began to review and make changes to its ever-declining health system. During that decade they established a “system of national accounts” that would later show an ever increasing problem with out-of-pocket cost and their devastating effects on middle to low income families. During a 2000 World Health Report done by the World Health Organization Mexico did very poorly in the reports fair financing disparity as it showed that 3 to 4 million Mexican citizens were experiencing events in which a health crisis or expense

¹⁶³ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶⁴ Lopez-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 1.

was producing what is often referred to as a “catastrophic event” and in many instances driving those affected to or below the poverty line.¹⁶⁵ A 2006 analysis by Julio Frenk showed that Mexicans spent more than half on out-of-pocket medical cost and the 2000 report showed that 1.5 million families suffered the effects of a medical catastrophe that drove them deeper into poverty.¹⁶⁶ His report also discussed the importance of health in understanding poverty and its effects on a country’s development and when connected to healthcare the importance of understanding how a proper system is essential to the success of not only the system as a whole but also the society it provides for.

With this in mind it is important to look at the strides Mexico has made in the last nine years in implementing a universal health program to cover all of its citizens and improve its health disparities by being the first country to implement the WHO definition of health coverage mentioned above.¹⁶⁷ Mexico has had social insurance since 1943 and in 1983 made health services a right granted by the Mexican constitution. As of 2000 Mexico still denied this right to about half of the population which did not obtain its insurance as a government employee or through the public

¹⁶⁵ Julio Frenk, Octavio Gomez-Dantes and Felicia Marie Knual, “The democratization of health in Mexico: financial innovations for universal coverage,” World Health Organization: Bulletin of the World Health Organization (2009)

¹⁶⁶ Julio Frenk, “Bridging the divide: global lessons from evidence-based health policy in Mexico,” *The Lancet: Public Health* 368 (September 9, 2006): 955.

¹⁶⁷ Rafael Lozano et al, “Health system reform in Mexico 3,” *The Lancet, Series* 368 (November 11, 2006): 1730.

sector.¹⁶⁸ The constitutional guarantee established in 1983 was a social right granted to all citizens and guaranteed access to health care services while setting the parameters for how that access was to be granted through a decentralized health care system. It became the first attempt to “regulate” services within the health sector through the Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia (Health Secretary).¹⁶⁹

As a result of the 2000 WHO report Mexico created the Sistema de Protección Social de Salud and through it the Seguro Popular to cover all of its citizens through universal healthcare. The system was initially created and funded by increasing public funding 1% of GDP per year over seven years starting in 2004 with the goal of having over 50 million uninsured Mexicans in the system by 2011.¹⁷⁰ It is important to note that this new system was put in place with guidelines for success and in an effort to tackle several health issues and goals outside of granting universal health care to all. These goals included children’s health and most importantly reducing out-of-pocket cost in an effort to minimize or eliminate the poverty effects this is known to ultimately have on developmental success. This new national healthcare system aimed and succeeded not only at enrolling its target goal of 50+ million Mexicans and achieving universal coverage but it also tackled

¹⁶⁸ Felicia Marie Knual et al, “The quest for universal health coverage: achieving social protection for all in Mexico,” *The Lancet, Health Policy* (August 16, 2012): 1.

¹⁶⁹ Sonia Fleury, Susana Belmartino and Enis Baris editors, *Reshaping Health Care in Latin America: A Comparative Analysis of Health Care Reform in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico* (Ottawa, ON, Canada: International Development Research Centre, 2000), 139-140.

¹⁷⁰ Frenk, Gomez-Dantes and Knual, “The democratization of health.”

developmental goals such as increasing immunizations and improving child health by increasing health spending on children from 12 million in 2007 to 102.6 million in 2011 and by expanding and addressing immunizations since the implementation of the Seguro Popular in 2004.¹⁷¹ Mexico took a big step in recognizing the detrimental affects an unhealthy population and poverty due to health cost can have on the development of the country as a whole. Their success is a model more countries should follow.

As described above however Mexico has taken further strides to create a system that aims at improving not just health care, but reduces health disparities and eliminates economic hardship on its population. As a primarily out-of-pocket system prior to 2004 Mexico's healthcare system was very different then the U.S. private sector lead system. Two of their biggest improvements came in infant mortality with a drop from 36 to 15 per 1,000 live births and with immunizations, measles in particular, increasing from 75 to 95 percent. In terms of immunizations Mexico's rates are even above the 2009 percentage of 92 percent for the U.S. who only saw a 2% increase from 1990 to 2009. By analyzing these disparities alone Mexico has made greater strides since it began looking at its failing healthcare system in 1990.¹⁷²

Mexico's move toward a universal healthcare system as early as 2003 with Seguro Popular showed how seriously they took their standing in the 2000 WHO analysis and report on world wide healthcare. In determining

¹⁷¹ Knaul et al, "Quest for universal health coverage," 12.

¹⁷² Bacon, *Right to Stay Home*, 57.

provisions and changes Mexico analyzed the long term effects of poverty as a result of a lack of sustainable, effective, cheap and easily accessible health care as means to address the issue rather than focusing on the immediate issues of funding the system. In the end this proved a success as they reached their goal of insuring over 50 million by 2012 while only having a health expenditure of about 6% of GDP. Mexico has made it a priority to use health as a means of development. They have focused on diminishing health disparities and eliminating economic hardships on its vulnerable population as a means of preventing the poverty that often leads to developmental decline. With access to universal, cost effective, health care those most vulnerable will have a means of prevention when it comes to undue medical hardships that often result in catastrophic events seen and discussed above in relation to Mexico. In many aspects Mexico has made greater strides at meeting standards set forth by the international community and has reached a better level of overall health starting with its most vulnerable population first, children.¹⁷³

Mexico's success in implement, and enrolling 50+ million in universal healthcare through a system that meets high standards of care and implements measures for further improvement is a system by which many can learn. Though Mexico has a long way to go in reaching the technological standards seen in other countries there is no better deterrent of health decline than simple accessibility. Mexico took that step and has had much

¹⁷³ Selee, "A Changing Mexico," 116.

more time to begin to improve in areas that will lead to overall success beyond what they have already reached. Mexico's regard to the 2000 WHO report showed how health does play a role in development and the detrimental effects it can have on poverty. Poverty triggers like catastrophic events have a lasting affect on the society it impacts and in the areas of strongest impact in Mexico's leading immigration states like Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero those effects are compounded with limited to no education, lower rates of life expectancy, high infant mortality, and limited access to basic infrastructure.¹⁷⁴ Improvements will definitely result in changes at home and will reduce the incidence of need to immigrate abroad.

Changing Administration – President Enrique Peña Nieto

Many of the changes Mexico has made since the 1990s in education and health have been stepping stones to lasting change in recent years that can be seen as effective means by which the country has tackled immigration. There is yet to be a clear understanding of why immigration numbers have declined in recent years, but reforms within Mexico cannot be denied as contributing factors even if limited in their overall effect compared to outside countries in making strong declines in poverty. Mexico has made impressive strides in improvements in education, nutrition and health but still has struggled to make the spending in these areas effective at tackling inequality

¹⁷⁴ Jayasuriya and Wodon, *Millennium Development Goals*, 67.

which was seen in 2006 when 11% of spending increased income inequality.¹⁷⁵

Changes in administration in 2013 back to the PRI lead by Enrique Peña Nieto can also be seen as a means by which changes should continue for the foreseeable future. Peña Nieto's administration focus has been on an agenda with "...five broad pillars: reducing violence; combating poverty; boosting economic growth; reforming education; and fostering social responsibility."¹⁷⁶ As previously discussed poverty has been a continued problem for Mexico notwithstanding of it's economic success and has historically been a prime factor in illegal immigration to the U.S. Peña Nieto's Finance Minister Videgaray acknowledged the success of social programs in combating the struggle for poverty especially during recessions and catastrophic events, but essential GDP and job growth is needed to support the changes that these programs have created. Peña Nieto's 2013 budget expanded federal pensions, created new life insurance programs for female heads of households and increased funding for *Oportunidades*.¹⁷⁷ The *Oportunidades* program has been a strong standing success throughout changing political regimes in Mexico primarily because of its success and transparency which have allowed it to remain outside of the often media driven campaigns within country that often sway success, or lack thereof,

¹⁷⁵ López-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 199.

¹⁷⁶ Clare Seelke, "Mexico's Peña Nieto Administration Priorities and Key Issues in U.S.-Mexican Relations," Congressional Research Service. August 15, 2013: 6.

¹⁷⁷ Seelke, "Nieto Administration," 9.

when dealing with flagship issues like poverty and as seen above in education.¹⁷⁸

Conclusion

Since the 2000s the Mexican governments changing administrations put forth successive pledges to tackle immigration by enforcing legal immigration, increasing security on its northern and southern borders and creating areas for success for workers within Mexico to diminish the need or desire to emigrate. However even during a recent 40 year low in immigration numbers corruption within Mexico's National Migration Institute, which enforces immigration, continues to run high and rural poverty and diminished formal employment opportunities continue to plague success.¹⁷⁹ Peña Nieto's government needs to continue to build on the infrastructures put in place for education and health reform by pushing for successful passage of his agenda items throughout his administration.

Mexico has made impressive strides in education and health reform since the late 1990s. A national understanding that improvements in both would be key to poverty improvements is at the core of any successes seen in immigration reduction as a result. Poverty is an every present issue in Mexico that still to this day affects a large majority of the population regardless of economic successes seen by the nation as a whole. Too large of a proportion of the population still lives in poverty or extreme poverty to

¹⁷⁸ López-Calva and Lustig, *A Decade of Progress?*, 98.

¹⁷⁹ Seelke, "Nieto Administration," 13.

consider reforms in education and health a true overarching success, but improvements are evident through programs like *Oportunidades* and Seguro Popular.

Poverty is fundamentally a push factor in Mexican immigration to the United States. Southern Mexican states such as Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas continue to be at the core of the immigration stream as they struggle to reach the same improvements in health, nutrition and education seen in to their north. The social networks historically created by continual immigration from these states can only be weakened with continual long lasting effects at home that are better at providing opportunities than those sought after in the U.S. Access to healthcare and a full education are fundamental to reaching those opportunities that in turn can steam the cycle of poverty.

Conclusion

Immigration from Mexico will continue to be an issue of contention between the United States and Mexico until both sides can work together to find a system that is mutually beneficial. Neither side can continue to either neglect the issue or strong-arm the other into benefiting only one side of the border. This thesis has shown that the history between the United States and Mexico is too complex to allow for a future in which immigration reform is not addressed through bilateral cooperation that has taken the time to understand not only why immigration occurs, but the history behind past failures that can benefit future policy discussions. Understanding that history and the underlying push pull factors of immigration are the key to successful policy reform on both sides of the border.

Chapter one of this thesis delved into the history of immigration from Mexico to the United States with the simple goal of showing how that history is crucial for future U.S. immigration reform. Understanding the intricate factors behind immigration shows that the desire to migrate from Mexico is not always driven by illegality or work. Recognizing those push pull factors is crucial to understanding how to implement a successful immigration policy for the future. Within this chapter underlying factors such as social networking play the biggest role in immigration as history has shown that decisions by the U.S. to close the border has only strengthened a network that already existed.

The unique, and long, history between the United States and Mexico has set the framework for a social, political and economic connection that is pivotal to why immigration reform is so crucial. An economic crisis on one side will affect the other while the social framework of Mexican culture has become a staple in states such as California. Yet immigration is still at the forefront of political discourse within the United States with the notion of closing a two thousand mile border often at the forefront of immigration policy discussions.

Chapter two of this thesis discussed the intricate politics behind each country's foreign policy on immigration. Understanding how each country approaches the issues is as important as grasping the entire issue itself if future immigration policy is to succeed. Bilateral mutual cooperation is of utmost importance between the United States and Mexico if sustainable policy is to not only be created, but also be successful for long term reform. This chapter focused on key political time periods in which the United States and Mexico missed opportunities for creating bilateral immigration reform. The United States has too often been the aggressor surrounding the issue and Mexico has too often taken the back seat approach. Changes on both sides of the border in how immigration policy is approached, through a foreign policy standpoint, are needed for successful changes to occur in the future.

This chapter also discussed the importance of understanding how the last three U.S. presidential administrations have missed opportunities for bilateral immigration reform due to either their own political agendas or outside factors such as 9/11. Foreign policy within the U.S. is too often riddled with domestic policy issues and driven by agendas favoring congressional interests. These factors within American politics have created a system in which issues such as immigration, which should be foreign policy issues, have become domestic issues that are too often surrounded by alternative agendas. These agendas spurn discussion but do not result in policy implementation or reform.

Chapter three discussed immigration from the Mexican side of the border in an attempt at addressing one of migration's biggest push factors, poverty. This chapter focused on the targeted changes Mexico can make in education and healthcare to not only address the issue, but also as a result reduce migration to the United States. Education and healthcare are two of the areas in which Mexico has made great strides within the last twenty years in an attempt to address the fundamental catastrophic results of not having either. This chapter focused on the great strides through Seguro Popular and *Oportunidades* in which Mexico has taken the lead in addressing the issue as a whole as well as the root causes from a lack of adequate access such as catastrophic events that then lead to poverty.

Seguro Popular and *Oportunidades* have shown how state mandated changes in access to education and healthcare can make a difference not only within a society, but in addressing the poverty that is still so ever present within Mexico. To this day Mexico struggles with extreme poverty in its most southern states that in turn have led to migration to the United States. As this chapter has shown addressing this issue is fundamental to addressing immigration a whole. The largest numbers of migrating Mexicans come from these southern states. This migration system has in turn created an established social network reliant on continued migration from the South to the North. Addressing that flow by focusing on the issues within Mexico is an important step to making long lasting changes. This chapter also discussed the importance of not only addressing healthcare and education, but ultimately creating a framework beyond that necessary for the changes needed to truly limit immigration such as a sound economic framework with adequate and sustainable work. Without that system in place immigration from Mexico will continue regardless of the improvements currently seen in combating poverty.

Policy reform aimed at immigration within the United States must focus on understanding why migration occurs. Future policy reform cannot begin to even address the issue successfully without understanding the fundamentals of why Mexicans are willing to take the often treacherous journey to the U.S. in hopes of a better opportunity. The most recent

attempts at creating a new immigration policy in 2013 lacked an understanding of not only “why” but also how the U.S. has played a role in the history of our current immigration debate. Future policy needs to understand what has worked and what has not by referring to policy time periods like the Bracero Program and the IRCA in order to learn from both their successes and failures. Enacting a two thousand mile border with maximum security is not going to either properly address the issue or make it go away. While a completely porous and open border is also not the answer an “open” border between the two countries would make a lasting difference. The Bracero Program was a time period in which both countries understood supply and demand. Mexico provided the labor and the U.S. opened its border to fill that gap. A future understanding of that mutual benefit is important to a successful policy reform and can be met by creating a similar policy now. The Bracero program was the last policy in which caps on migration between Mexico and the United States did not exist and in which the mutual benefit of economic and political partnership was understood. No policy since then has understood or taken into account the positive benefits of a program like the Bracero Program and instead attempts have been created at reducing migration and steering it away from labor and into the desire for higher educated migrants.

Future attempts at immigration reform by either the current or future administrations in the U.S. need to reconsider that notion of openness. While

security concerns post 9/11 make it unwise to create a truly open border the understanding that allowing immigrants in to work and flow freely back and forth, on visas, addressing the need for work and the demand for labor is important. Mexican immigration during the Bracero program was driven by the understanding that caps in visas did not exist as long as labor was needed and the border remained open so migrants could freely return home. Permanent residency has never been the fundamental focus of immigrants from Mexico, but by forcing a closed border with limited means by which to cross the notion of illegality becomes ever present when necessity is high. Future policy reform within the United States should create a system by which Mexican immigration is considered separately and with deeper scrutiny and understanding then immigration as a whole.

The current Barack Obama administration on the United States side of immigration reform has not done enough to address the issue through a policy standpoint. The same pitfalls seen within the George W. Bush administration are present now as Obama struggles to keep immigration reform separate from congressional ideals. Immigration policy continues to be a domestic policy issue dominated by notions of what one side of the congressional aisle wants and the other does not. The current administration has neither put forth a sustainable attempt at policy reform nor had the strength to keep congressional ideals out of future reform. A successful

attempt at immigration reform will not be seen within the framework of a system in which beliefs and ideals out way the need for change.

Policy reform on the Mexican side must also take a long and important look at immigration. Mexico has had the tendency to sidestep the issue and or rely on the United States to make immigration reform its main policy agenda item from the other side of the border. Future Mexican reform must address migration from the root causes of why it is occurring in the first place.

Poverty is the fundamental area in which Mexico must continue to make strides through education, nutrition and healthcare reform that addresses the issue as a whole. Mexico must also put immigration on its policy agenda items along with addressing issues such as poverty, guns and drugs. By allowing the United States to dictate the standards of immigration policy between the two countries Mexico is missing the opportunity to create a bilateral agenda that would benefit both sides of the border. Making demands and or pushing scrutiny on the United States when it makes a policy decision that Mexico is not content with is not the means by which positive changes will occur. Mexico must become more involved in creating a policy reform within its own borders that address the issues of why immigrants migrate and within that must create a system by which the country's citizens can create sustainability outside of dependencies on the by products of immigration such as remittances.

The change in political parties within Mexico in 2012 created an unforeseen return to the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) that could have resulted in negative consequences for Mexico. To date Enrique Peña Nieto has not made immigration a top priority within his administration, but has made combating poverty a top political issue. While the administration seems to be continuing the tradition of sidestepping the issue as a whole they are addressing one of the fundamental causes of outward migration. While not focusing on immigration policy reform is not beneficial to either side it is encouraging to see Mexico addressing the root causes of migration. This new administrations focus on one of the underlying causes of migration is a step in the right direction, but sustainable change will only occur if policy reform is put in place.

This thesis focused on immigration in an attempt to show the need for policy reform through understanding and cooperation. The issue of immigration is multifaceted and complicated permitting continued study outside the issue of policy reform. The research focus of this thesis did not delve into any possible changes in immigration patterns within the last two years that could show a changing trend in immigration. Future study into this area of change could benefit how future policy reform can be successful. The continued success of how Seguro Popular and *Oportunidades* is stemming migration flows is also limited by the available data and time in which these programs have been fully implemented as a means of

diminishing poverty and affecting migration. Only time will fully show if these program changes within Mexico continue to have a positive affect on declining immigration numbers as shown within this thesis. The future policy reform decisions by both current administrations within the United States and Mexico is limited by what could happen versus what will happen within the context of the research done for this thesis. If either administration is successful is yet to be seen, as is what information they chose to use when making reform decisions. This thesis has shown areas in which both sides of the border can learn from a comprehensive look at immigration for future success.

The issue of immigration from Mexico to the United States will continue to be an every changing and contentious issue between both countries. How the issue is studied is important for long-term success in implementing immigration reform. Understanding the underlying push pull factors behind immigration is fundamental to understanding immigration as a whole. Why someone migrates is crucial to understanding how to change the need to do so in the future. The issue of gender migration from Mexico to the United States is an area of future study that is important to understanding the “why” behind immigration. Why men and women migrate differs and is important to understanding what drives illegal migration from Mexico and how to prevent it in the future. The area of border security is also important to understanding the issue as it stands now between the two

countries. Why the United States closed its border and has continued to fight the struggle for border security is also an area of immigration study that is important in understanding the dynamics that exist between both countries. While this thesis did not focus on this issue it continues to be a topic of interest for both sides and an important area in which immigration continues to be highly debated. Any areas in which the United States has made attempts or strides at improving Mexican poverty is also an area of research and study that should be looked at more closely. This thesis showed that Mexico has made a strong effort at sovereignty and maintaining a distance from U.S. policy reform, but whether or not that extends to areas such as programs for poverty improvement would be interesting to understand. Immigration has become a very unilateral issue, but the idea of cross border aid is important in understanding if the U.S. understands the need to address the underlying factors of migration outside of policy reform but in turn simply neglects it when addressing its own reform attempts.

This thesis showed that Mexican immigration has a long history well beyond recent policy debates. Successfully immigration reform within both countries will only be contingent on understanding and addressing the push pull factors behind immigration. How each country chooses to address the issue on either side of the border should not be separate from understanding that the decision will ultimately affect the other side. A true understanding of immigration reform will be created by a bilateral policy agenda that benefits

both sides of the border while addressing the issue as a whole. Immigration reform is within the grasp of both countries if and when bilateral cooperation is put before unilateral agendas.

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Curriculum Vita

Karla McCarthy was born in San Jose, Costa Rica in December of 1984. As an infant she moved with her family to the Los Angeles area of Southern California where she grew up until moving to Baltimore, Maryland in 2003. She graduated with high honors and within the top five of her class from La Serna High School in Whittier, California in 2003 and went on to attend The Johns Hopkins University. In 2007 she completed a double Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Latin American Studies with the ultimate goal of one day pursuing a career closely related to work in that field of study. After graduation she went on to work for the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Her interest in International Relations and Government then led her to pursue a Master of Arts with the Johns Hopkins Advanced Academic Programs on the Washington DC campus. She earned her degree in May of 2014. As of April 2014 she worked for the Bloomberg School of Public Health at the Johns Hopkins University within the Center for Communication Programs working with countries in Asia, Africa and Latin American on development and health disparities issues.